

**BALANCE OF POWER THEORY MEETS AL QAEDA:  
DYNAMICS OF NON-STATE ACTOR BALANCING  
IN POSTINTERNATIONAL POLITICS**

A Master's Thesis

by

AYTAÇ DENK

Department of  
International Relations  
Bilkent University  
Ankara  
July 2008



**To my family**

“BALANCE OF POWER THEORY MEETS AL QAEDA:  
DYNAMICS OF NON-STATE ACTOR BALANCING  
IN POSTINTERNATIONAL POLITICS”

The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences  
of  
Bilkent University

by

AYTAÇ DENK

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE DEPARTMENT OF  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
BİLKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA

July 2008

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

-----  
Assoc. Prof. Ersel Aydınlı  
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

-----  
Asst. Prof. Nil Seda Şatana  
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

-----  
Asst. Prof. Lerna Yanık  
Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences

-----  
Prof. Dr. Erdal Erel  
Director

## **ABSTRACT**

### **BALANCE OF POWER THEORY MEETS AL QAEDA: DYNAMICS OF NON-STATE ACTOR BALANCING IN POSTINTERNATIONAL POLITICS**

Denk, Aytac

M.A., Department of International Relations

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Ersel Aydinli

July 2008

The bulk of studies on the balance of power, which constitutes balance of power theory, suggest that only states are involved in balance of power dynamics. This thesis maintains that exclusion of non-state actors (NSAs) from balance of power dynamics constitutes a significant gap in balance of power theory. This gap originates from a failure to notice fundamental changes in the structure of, and actorness in, world politics. As a result of these macro level and micro level changes, NSAs became both motivated and capable of balancing against states. This thesis evaluates Al Qaeda's challenge against the United States as a case study of balancing behavior. A close examination of its discourse reveals that Al Qaeda is motivated to balance against America while mechanisms that it uses demonstrate that the organization is capable of engaging in such balancing. This balancing behavior has not only undermined American power but also appears to be playing a role in global power distribution dynamics in world politics. This thesis is, in short, an attempt to fill the theoretical and empirical gap that exists in balance of power theory. It concludes that the full potential of balance of power theory can be realized only by extending its boundaries to cover the postinternational world structure and thus opening it up to NSAs.

Keywords: The Balance of Power, Balancing, Postinternational, State-centric World, Multi-centric World, Non-State Actor, Al Qaeda

## ÖZET

### **GÜÇ DENGESİ TEORİSİ EL KAİDE'YLE KARŞI KARŞIYA: DEVLET-DIŞI AKTÖR Dengelemesinin POSTINTERNASYONAL SİYASETTEKİ DİNAMİKLERİ**

Denk, Aytaç

M.A., Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

Danışman: Doç. Dr. Ersel Aydın

Temmuz 2008

Güç dengesi teorisini oluşturan çalışmaların çoğu güç dengesi dinamiklerinin sadece devletleri kapsadığını öne sürmektedir. Bu tez, devlet-dışı aktörlerin güç dengesinden hariç tutulmasının güç dengesi teorisinde önemli bir boşluk teşkil ettiğini iddia etmektedir. Bu boşluk, dünya siyasetinin yapısındaki ve dünya siyaseti içindeki aktörlükteki temel değişimleri farkedememekten kaynaklanmaktadır. Makro ve mikro düzeydeki bu değişimler sonucu, devlet-dışı aktörler devletleri dengelemek için hem güdülenmiş hem de yetkin hale gelmişlerdir. Bu tez El Kaide'nin Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ne karşı olan mücadelesini dengeleme davranışını örnekleyen bir olay incelemesi kapsamında değerlendirmektedir. El Kaide'nin söyleminin yakın plan incelemesi onun Amerika'yı dengelemek için güdülendiğini gösterirken, kullandığı mekanizmalar örgütün dengelemeye girişmekte yetkin olduğunu ispat etmektedir. Bu dengeleme hareketi sadece Amerika'nın gücünü zayıflatmamakta aynı zamanda dünya siyasetindeki küresel güç dağılımı dinamiklerinde de rol oynamaktadır. Kısaca, bu tez güç dengesi teorisindeki teorik ve empirik boşluğu doldurmaya yönelik bir çabanın ürünüdür. Güç dengesi teorisinin tam potansiyelinin gerçekleşmesinin ancak teori sınırlarının genişleyerek postinternasyonal dünya yapısını kapsaması ve teorisinin devlet-dışı aktörlere açılmasıyla mümkün olacağı neticesine varmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Güç Dengesi, Dengeleme, Postinternasyonal, Devlet-merkezli Dünya, Çok-merkezli Dünya, Devlet-dışı Aktör, El Kaide

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I cannot express enough gratitude to my supervisor Assoc. Prof. Ersel Aydınlı. This study would not have materialized without his constant guidance and enthusiastic support. His enormous expertise and “the way his mind works” will always be an inspiration for me. More importantly, getting to know him was an invaluable life experience. How he looks at life has made a huge impact on the way I look at life.

My heartfelt thanks goes to Asst. Prof. Nil Şatana for sharing her research insight, always being the first person to offer help whenever I ran into a problem, and having an unwavering confidence in me. Her input to this thesis is immeasurable. I would also like to thank Assist. Prof. Lerna Yanık for serving on my thesis committee.

I am greatly indebted to Assoc. Prof. Ayşegül Kibaroglu and Assoc. Prof. Mustafa Kibaroglu for their endless support and encouragement throughout the course of my undergraduate and graduate studies. I also owe my thanks to Prof. Meliha Altunışık, Assoc. Prof. Fatih Tayfur, Assist. Prof. Julie Mathews Aydınli, Assist. Prof. Paul Williams, Ms. Muge Keller, and Ms. Pinar Kılıçhan Şener for their continuous support and guidance.

I would like to thank the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) for funding this study.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my family for their lifelong love and support. This thesis is dedicated to my best friend, my brother Erman Denk; and to my idols in life, my parents Mehbare Denk and Ayhan Denk who have devoted themselves to their sons. All my endeavors are – and will be – the fruits of their devotion to me.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ÖZET.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES .....	xii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xiii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER II ‘THE BALANCE OF POWER’ AND ‘BALANCING’ IN THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS..	8
2.1. Understanding the Balance of Power .....	9
2.1.1. Defining the Balance of Power .....	9
2.1.2. The Balancer .....	17
2.1.3. The Mechanics of Balances and Balancing: An Automatic Process?.....	18
2.2. Choosing to Balance or Not: Motivational Factors.....	21
2.2.1. Why Do States Balance? .....	21
2.2.1.1. Balancing Against Power.....	21
2.2.1.2. Balancing against Threat.....	22

2.2.2. Why Do States Not Balance? .....	23
2.2.2.1. Seeking More Profits and Fewer Costs .....	23
2.2.2.2. Intrastate Problems .....	25
2.2.2.3. Threat Perceptions .....	26
2.2.2.4. Power Considerations .....	27
2.2.3. Balancing as a Non-Statist Activity .....	28
2.2.4. Motivational Factors in the case of NSAs .....	29
2.3. Balancing Types .....	32
2.3.1. Hard Balancing .....	32
2.3.2. Soft Balancing .....	34
2.3.3. Asymmetric Balancing .....	38
2.3.4. Asymmetric Balancing in the Context of Balance of Power Theory .....	39
2.4. Functions/Merits of the Balance of Power .....	42
2.5. Inadequacy of the Balance of Power in Theory and Practice .....	46
2.6. Why Should Non-State Actors Be Incorporated Into Balance of Power Theory? .....	53
2.6.1. Motivation of Potential Balancers .....	54
2.6.2. Capabilities of Potential Balancers .....	57
2.6.3. Impact of the Balancing Behavior .....	60
2.6.4. Extension of Balance of Power Theory: A Necessity .....	62
CHAPTER III NON-STATE ACTORNESS AND BALANCING .....	65
3.1. Changing Context .....	66
3.1.1. From International to Postinternational Politics .....	66

3.1.2. Emergence of Two Worlds .....	68
3.1.3. Factors Characterizing Posinternational Politics and the Dual World	
Structure .....	70
3.1.3.1. Proliferation of Non-State Actors (and Increasing Importance of the Individual) .....	70
3.1.3.2. Proliferation of New Issues (and Increasing Inadequacy of States in Confronting Them).....	72
3.1.3.3. Different Centers of Authority in the Political Space .....	73
3.1.3.4. Declining Importance of Territory and National Boundaries (and Expansion of Transnational Activities and Movements) .....	75
3.1.3.5. Information and Communications Innovation .....	76
3.1.3.6. The Rise of Network Systems.....	77
3.1.3.7. Conclusion: A Heterogeneous World Politics .....	78
3.2. Changing Actorness in a Changing Context .....	79
3.2.1. Influential Actorness in Postinternational Politics .....	80
3.2.2. Categorization of Non-State Actors .....	84
3.2.3. How Do Non-State Actors Matter in World Politics?.....	86
3.3. Changing Balancing as a Pathway of the Interactive Relationship between the Context and the Actor .....	88
3.4. Balancing Capacities of Influential Violent Non-State Actors: Why Are They More Capable and Likely to Balance? .....	91
3.4.1. Violent Non-State Actors as Organic Entities.....	91
3.4.2. Outsider to the State-Centric World.....	93

3.4.3. Double-Barreled Way of Gaining Grassroots Support and Recognition ..	96
3.4.3.1. The Violent Façade .....	96
3.4.3.2. The Non-Violent Façade .....	99
3.4.4. Exploiting Identities & Creating Different Centers of Authority .....	99
3.4.5. Employment of Ahierarchical and Decentralized Network Systems.....	101
3.4.6. Transcendence of National Boundaries.....	102
3.4.7. Beneficiaries and Exploiters of the Information and Communications Innovation.....	103
3.5. Unique Characteristics of NSA Balancing .....	104
3.6. Revisiting the Impact of NSA Balancing: How Does NSA Balancing Contribute to the Dual World Structure? .....	108
CHAPTER IV BALANCING DISCOURSE OF AL QAEDA .....	111
4.1. Motivations of Al Qaeda: What Does it Really Want? .....	112
4.1.1. A Political Contest within the Muslim World.....	113
4.1.2. Shifting the Focus of the Fight towards the Far Enemy.....	114
4.2. Reasons for the Anger of Jihadis at the Far Enemy .....	116
4.2.1. American Occupation of the Muslim World.....	116
4.2.1.1. Responsibility for Muslim Killings throughout the World .....	116
4.2.1.2. Military Occupation of the Holy Places .....	118
4.2.1.3. Economic Exploitation of the Muslim World .....	118
4.2.1.4. Cultural Contamination .....	119
4.2.2. American Support for the State of Israel.....	119
4.2.3. Corrupt and Illegitimate Arab Regimes .....	121

4.2.3.1. Allowing the Occupation of Muslim Lands.....	122
4.2.3.2. Suspending Sharia and Repressing the Ulema (Scholars of Islam) .	123
4.2.3.3. Causing Economic and Social Failure .....	124
4.3. Short-term Objectives.....	125
4.3.1. Ending the American Occupation of the Muslim World .....	125
4.3.2. Ending the American Support for Israel .....	128
4.3.3. Ending the American Support for Corrupt and Illegitimate Arab Regimes.....	128
4.4. Signs of Balancing in the Short-term Objectives .....	129
4.5. Signs of Balancing in the Short-to-Medium Term Objectives.....	134
4.6. Signs of Balancing in the Long-term Objectives .....	135
4.7. A Political Act Spurred by Religious and Cultural Themes.....	137
CHAPTER V THE MECHANISMS OF AL QAEDA’S BALANCING AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF NSA BALANCING FOR THE UNITED STATES .....	
5.1. The Mechanisms of Al Qaeda’s Balancing.....	143
5.1.1. Exploiting Information and Communication Technologies.....	143
5.1.1.1. Internal Communication.....	145
5.1.1.2. External Communication.....	147
5.1.1.3. Maintenance of Operational Capability .....	149
5.1.2. Organizational Evolution .....	151
5.1.2.1. Pre-9/11 Period.....	151
5.1.2.1.1. Early Organizational Structure.....	151

5.1.2.1.2. Gradual Transition to a Network Structure .....	152
5.1.2.2. Post 9/11 Period .....	153
5.1.2.2.1. Decentralization of the Chain of Command.....	153
5.1.2.2.2. From Al Qaeda to Al Qaedas .....	156
5.1.2.2.3. From Al Qaeda Network to Al Qaedaism.....	158
5.1.3. The Use of Asymmetric Violence.....	159
5.1.4. Exploiting Dark Spots of the State-Centric World.....	167
5.1.5. Popular Support and Recruitment .....	171
5.2. Implications of Al Qaeda's Balancing for the United States .....	177
5.2.1. Impact on the American Security Culture and Practices.....	177
5.2.2. Impact on American Hard Power.....	181
5.2.3. Impact on American Soft Power .....	182
5.2.4. Impact on Anti-Hegemonic Behaviors.....	186
CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION.....	191
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	196

## **LIST OF TABLES**

1. Security Maximization Sources in NSA Balancing .....	56
---	----

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

1. Dual World Structure .....	68
2. Balancing Discourse of Al Qaeda .....	136



# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

*No less than anyone else, students of world politics live and work in conceptual jails: while their frameworks, models, and paradigms serve them well as creative guides to the framing and analysis of problems, the same conceptual equipment may blind them to change that lies outside its scope. Such is the dilemma we face today. Accustomed to presuming a state system predominantly composed of sovereign states authorized to address and cope with change, we are unlikely to inquire whether states have been weakened and their micro components strengthened, whether the nature of force, legitimacy, and authority relations has undergone meaningful redefinition, whether the state system continues to be the prime organizer of global politics, or whether another world has emerged alongside the state system as the basis for world order.*

*James N. Rosenau<sup>1</sup>*

The tragic attacks of September 11, 2001 on the United States by Al Qaeda changed the course of history. At the societal level, the political, social and economic impact of these attacks rippled through the whole world and affected a large number of people in one way or another. At the governmental level, it was a bitter reminder of how several terms characterizing Cold War relationships such as stability and predictability had lost their relevance in contemporary politics. After all, even the

---

<sup>1</sup> See Rosenau (1990: 37-38).

only superpower in world politics could no longer feel secure. Without a doubt, the aftermath of these attacks had even graver consequences at both societal and governmental levels. In the age of global war on terror, a good deal of axioms in the policy world was thrown into the dustbin of history.

Political science scholarship was no exception in this sense. Frameworks of analysis hitherto taken for granted were more frequently questioned. There was also an immediate surge of interest in terrorist organizations and most particularly in Al Qaeda. However, in my point of view, the most important impact of Al Qaeda's fight against the United States on the political science discipline was exposing the need of breaking "conceptual jails." The opening observation of this thesis is made by James N. Rosenau back in 1990. In 2008, it still holds true; especially because, despite unprecedented changes and developments, many political scientists have stuck with their business-as-usual mentality in understanding what is taking place in world politics. They have consciously turned a blind eye to the ever-changing nature of the context and actors of world politics. Some other became trapped in conceptual jails rather unwittingly. Yet, Al Qaeda's challenge against the United States and its aftermath made it clearer that revisiting hitherto established theories, hypotheses, and assumptions about world politics was a necessity, not a choice.

This is the impact of September 11 on my worldview. As the post-September 11 era unfolded, I became more and more uncomfortable with my own conceptual jails. Seeing that particular aspects of Al Qaeda's challenge against the United States as well as the latter's response to Al Qaeda did not fit into certain theories in the International Relations (IR) discipline, I began revisiting these theories. This is the

reason why I chose this topic for my thesis. Simply put, this study attempts to break some of the conceptual jails in IR theory.

The research question of this thesis is why and how non-state actors (NSAs) such as terrorist organizations balance against powerful state actors. The bottom line of my argument in this thesis is that both world structure and what it takes to be an influential actor in this structure have altered in recent decades. States and their state-centric world coexist with a multi-centric world composed of a variety of non-state actors. However, one of the main theories of realist school of thought, balance of power theory, is designed to deal with an anarchical state-centric world composed of states as rational and unitary actors. Balancing, in the theory, is considered an inter-state behavior and balance of power dynamics are considered to be applied only to states. In this study, I suggest that the boundaries of balance of power theory should be extended in order to cover the contemporary multi-centric world and NSAs as influential actors within this world. I argue that NSAs became both motivated and capable of balancing against states on account of changes in world structure and actorness in global affairs. Excluding NSAs from balance of power dynamics is undercutting the explanatory power of balance of power theory. Throughout the study, therefore, I will explore the potential of NSA balancing and provide a case study that demonstrates the actual use of this potential. I will argue that Al Qaeda's challenge against the United States exemplifies an NSA balancing behavior against a major state.

I believe that the very reason why I became interested in this subject largely accounts for why this thesis can make a contribution to the IR discipline. This study is

an attempt to break conceptual jails within balance of power theory. To date, the balance of power has been studied by a large number of theorists from different backgrounds. Yet, most – if not all – of them concentrated their efforts on balance of power dynamics within the state-centric world. By employing non-statist lenses, this study aims at filling a gap within the IR theory.

Methodologically speaking, this research relies on a theoretical analysis of balance of power literature and an empirical test of my argument through the use of a case study. Primary sources used are theoretical studies complemented with qualitative and quantitative data where appropriate. For the case study, this thesis benefited largely from statements, speeches, and interviews of key Al Qaeda leaders in order to have an insightful grasp of the discourse of the movement. The primary reason why a case study methodology is used in this study is that there are only a few NSAs today that are engaged in a full-fledged balancing behavior. This fact renders many research methods inapplicable in this study while it makes the case study approach more appropriate.

It should also be noted that I have encountered a number of methodological difficulties in this thesis. One of them was that there were very few studies conducted to date, which bear a resemblance to this research. As already argued, none of the theorists dealing with balance of power had transcended the boundaries of the state-centric world in their research. The second difficulty I encountered was that there are also very few scholarly work that analyze Al Qaeda from a theoretical perspective. Unfortunately, not only Al Qaeda but almost all terrorist groups find a place within terrorism studies rather than in the IR discipline.

Before moving on to the next chapter, it would be useful to present a brief outline of the study. In Chapter II, a detailed literature review of balance of power theory is presented. Since the primary purpose of this study is to explore dynamics of NSA balancing, it is essential to have an elaborate insight into what this term denotes within the framework of balance of power theory. Accordingly, several dimensions of balance of power dynamics are addressed; ranging from conceptual puzzles to motivations of balancing, and to main balancing types. What is intended with this thorough exploration is locating the gap in balance of power theory; that the theory is designed and operates only within the state-centric world, and its corollary that NSAs are excluded from balance of power dynamics on false grounds. It is then argued that NSAs should be incorporated to balance of power theory because they are not less motivated and capable than states for balancing and their balancing can create a systemic impact in the same way as states can.

Chapter III seeks to explore the changing context of world politics that traditional balance of power theorists have undervalued. It is maintained that dynamic changes in world politics drive us to a postinternational world where the state-centric world consisting of states coexist with the multi-centric world composed of a variety of actors. Accordingly, changing actorness is also addressed within this chapter since what it takes to be an influential actor in postinternational politics differs from earlier eras as well. It is then argued that if both context and actorness within that context is changing, the nature of balancing is consequently changing as well because balancing is a pathway of the interactive relationship between the actor and its context. Following a discussion about why violent NSAs (VNSAs) are more likely than non-

violent NSAs to engage in balancing, unique characteristics of NSA balancing in postinternational politics is examined. Finally, the question of systemic impact of NSA balancing is revisited with a discussion about how it contributes to the dual world structure where the state-centric and multi-centric worlds coexist.

Chapter IV comprises the first part of my case study; Al Qaeda's balancing against the United States. The primary purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that motivations of Al Qaeda in its fight can be properly analyzed within the framework of balance of power theory. It is argued that Al Qaeda's short-term objective is balancing against the American threat to maximize security, which would lead to a different balance of power in the medium and long term. Put differently, it is claimed that the nature of Al Qaeda's fight is more than a religious struggle or an irrational political fight with apocalyptic purposes. In doing so, statements, speeches, and interviews of key Al Qaeda leaders are extensively used in order to have an insight into the balancing discourse of Jihadis.

In the first section of Chapter V, the question of how Al Qaeda put its balancing discourse into practice is addressed. It is maintained that Jihadis have taken advantage of both their non-state actorness and opportunities within the multi-centric world in order to offset their disadvantage in conventional military and material capabilities. A detailed examination of how Al Qaeda has used information and communication technologies; how it has evolved from a hierarchical mode of organization to a decentralized network system supported by affiliated groups worldwide, and perhaps more importantly to an idea; how it has employed asymmetric use of violence; how it has exploited dark spots of the state-centric world

such as failed or weak states for organizational and operational purposes; and how it has manipulated its constituency for continual support and maintained a large reserve of recruits are presented.

The second section of this chapter explores the implications of Al Qaeda's balancing for the United States. The main proposition of this section is that, although Al Qaeda has not achieved most of its short and long-term objectives (e.g. creating a change in particular American policies, ousting Arab regimes, or establishing a unified Islamic Caliphate), its balancing behavior has created serious consequences for American power in world politics. It is maintained that Al Qaeda's balancing against Washington had a fundamental impact on the American security culture and practices as well as its hard and soft power, and on anti-hegemonic behaviors among rival states of America. It is concluded that the collective outcome of these has not only undermined American power but also contributed to fundamental changes that are taking place in the global balance of power.

Chapter VI summarizes the main conclusions of this research, states its theoretical and policy-relevant implications, and identifies a number of further research directions.

## CHAPTER II

### **‘THE BALANCE OF POWER’ AND ‘BALANCING’ IN THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Throughout this study, the question of how and why a non-state actor balances against a great power will be analyzed. The bottom line of the analysis, therefore, is to construct a comprehensive framework as to what *the balance of power and balancing* denote. This task is by no means straightforward. Balance of power considerations are believed to have existed even in ancient times, and the term – with its varieties – has been studied systematically over decades. Thus it is no accident that there is hardly unanimity on many dimensions of these terms. Still, in order to gain some insight into these concepts, it is essential to highlight the salient points on which both theorists in the literature and statesmen in practice have converged. In this chapter, I will examine these main points and question the adequacy of balance of power theory in contemporary global politics.

The first section of this chapter consists of several conceptual analyses. A number of definitions, features, and categorizations of balance of power and balancing concepts will be examined. Subsequently, the reasons offered in the theory as to why states balance or do not balance against a rising power will be evaluated.



Thirdly, I will address some balancing types. Following a discussion on the functions of balance of power politics (e.g. whether balance of power brings about peace or not), I will examine a number of question marks about the balance of power, both in theoretical and practical terms. In the concluding analysis, an overall critique as to the need of a modified balance of power theory will be presented. It is important to note that my arguments about the need of incorporating non-state actors to the traditional balance of power theory will be provided within relevant sections as well. In other words, the setbacks of the theory will be mentioned where appropriate. Throughout the study, therefore, there will be an emphasis on the gap in balance of power theory. Yet, the concluding section aims at a final attempt of revealing the gist of this thesis and how it can contribute to the theory itself.

## **2.1. Understanding the Balance of Power**

### **2.1.1. Defining the Balance of Power**

It would not be wrong to claim that “the balance of power” is arguably one of the most contentious terms in international politics. Throughout history numerous actors have defined it in different ways. Therefore, as Inis Claude (1967: 13) put it neatly, “the trouble with the balance of power is not that it has no meaning, but that it has too many meanings.” Yet many eminent theorists have provided their own categorizations despite the seeming complexity. It would be of use, for the sake of clarity, to invoke some of them. This might help the reader to observe the commonalities of them and make it clearer how the term has been used to date.

Hans Morgenthau (1985: 187), in his celebrated work *Politics Among Nations*, informs the readers that the balance of power is used in four senses in the book: “(1) as a policy aimed at a certain state of affairs, (2) as an actual state of affairs, (3) as an approximately equal distribution of power, (4) as any distribution of power.” Morgenthau also notes that the term is used in his study, if not otherwise stated, as “an actual state of affairs in which power is distributed among several nations with approximate equality.”

Another broad classification is provided by Claude (1967: 13-21). Based on his earlier studies on the balance of power, he argues that the term has been used as a situation, as a policy or as a system. In the interpretation of the balance of power as a situation, what is implied is a distribution of power among states. Yet one point is particularly noteworthy in this explanation. Claude underlines the fact that distribution of power does not necessarily mean, and should not be conflated with, an “equal” distribution of power. Balance of power has also been used to imply an unequal situation in which power is heavily weighted on particular countries vis-à-vis others. In his second interpretation, the balance of power is used as a policy to curtail particular nations with the purpose of retaining and sustaining equilibrium. Finally, Claude contends that the term at times denotes a system. This system, based on a set of regulations, organizes inter-state relations.

Last but not least, another prominent theorist, Joseph S. Nye (1993: 53-58) points out multiple usages of the term. In effect, Nye’s categorization is very similar to Claude’s analysis. He argues that the balance of power refers to distributions of power, balancing policy, or multipolar systems. As to distributions of power, Nye

(1993: 53) contends that the balance usually means “any distribution of power.” It might be used either as “the status quo, the existing distribution of power” or as an equal distribution of power. The second usage, for him, refers to a balancing policy in which states try to forestall the rise of a preponderant power. The motivation behind this policy is to preserve their independence. Nye’s third category is rather different from other usages of the term as a system. He confines this usage to describing only multipolar systems. Like that of the nineteenth century Europe, these multipolar systems include several powers and function only in so far as these powers play by the rules of the system.

As mentioned above, the purpose of invoking these classifications is to outline the basic usages of the term balance of power in theory. All in all, it can be argued that the balance of power is used to suggest at least three occurrences: a situation/distribution of power which can signify equilibrium or disequilibrium; a balancing policy to achieve or maintain a situation; and a system, which is grounded on balancing dynamics, manages inter-state relationships based on some rules, and helps states to preserve their independence. Without a doubt there are slight differences within these categories. However, almost all definitions of the balance of power in the literature fit into these three groups.

For example one of the key figures of the English School, Hedley Bull (1995: 97) considers the balance of power as a situation where there is not a preponderant power. Arnold Wolfers (1962: 118) also views the term as the opposite of hegemony, standing for an approximate distribution of power. Subsequent to his own categorization of the term, Claude expresses the sense he favors. For Claude (1967:

88) the balance of power should be appraised as a decentralized system, “an arrangement within which independent states operate autonomously, without the controlling direction of a superior agency, to manipulate power relationships among themselves.” On the other hand, Quincy Wright (1965: 743) suggests that the term has a static and a dynamic meaning; the former represents “the condition which accounts for the continued existence of independent governments in contact with one another” while the latter refers to “the policies adopted by governments to maintain that condition.” Thus, what he believes to be the static meaning can be placed within “the balance of power as a situation/distribution of power.” What he means by the dynamic sense of the balance of power, on the other hand, is apparently “the balance of power as a policy.”<sup>2</sup>

It should be noted that these three broad categories do not seem to have clear-cut boundaries. When it is clearly stated that the balance of power is a distribution of power or a system which is achieved or preserved through a balancing policy, there is usually no confusion, provided that there is a consistent adherence to these usages. Likewise, stating that the term, balance of power, will be used only as a policy choice clears potential evasions. However, some authors, consciously or not, refer to these meanings in combination when making an analysis about the balance of power. For example only the term balance of power is used in ways that imply all these three

---

<sup>2</sup> Wright’s reference to the static sense of balance of power as “the condition which accounts for the continued existence of independent governments in contact with one another” might confuse some readers. It is not crystal clear whether he refers to a distribution of power or a system. Yet, when one looks at his entire writing, it is possible to see that what he means by the static sense is more like an approximate distribution of power. Wright argues that such a condition is believed to have contributed to the existence of independent nations. More precisely, the balance of power is not a system on its own. Rather, it is a situation leading to the continuation of a system of independent states. The emphasis in the definition seems to be on “the condition”, not on “the continued existence of independent governments in contact with one another.”

meanings: system, distribution of power, and a policy. The result of such switches from one meaning to another – in the absence of adequate explanation – leads to ambiguity at times.

As mentioned above, in some works of the theory, the term balancing is used rather separately from the term balance of power. For example, Morton Kaplan (1990: 277-279) considers the balance of power as an international system comprised of five or more actors. This system is predicated upon a number of essential rules. If the actors, the argument runs, do not stick with these rules, the likely result is failure and instability of the system. Kaplan also makes references to the term balancing as a rule for the successful operation of the balance of power system. The problems in the balancing process are, it is argued, likely to destabilize balance of power system. T. V. Paul (2004: 2) also states his preference for a clear demarcation of balancing and balances of power; the former denoting a foreign policy choice or strategy, and the latter meaning an outcome of power equilibrium stemming from these balancing policies. Kenneth Waltz (1979) is another theorist deploying balancing policies apart from the balance of power. For Waltz, balancing is a choice states make in order to secure their existence. The balance of power, on the other hand, is an outcome of states' efforts to balance via different methods. It is a situation in which there is an approximate equality of power among constituent units of the international system. Balancing, in other words, has an integral role in the formation of balances of power.

In short, balancing and the balance of power are quite intertwined in balance of power theory. While some see them as successive developments (balancing leading

to the balance of power, either as a power distribution or system), others use merely the term balance of power to imply a balancing policy.

All in all, how do these different connotations in the theory make sense with respect to the purpose of this study? They perfectly highlight the need for a modification to balance of power theory. Thereby, they are the starting point for introducing my arguments.

As can be seen from the explanations above, NSAs are essentially ignored in balance of power theory. Whatever definition is used, there seems to be no room for the presence of NSAs within balance of power politics. This in turn leaves many studies inadequate today; inadequate in the sense that they fail to capture contemporary power relationships. Balance of power theory, which is one of the major theories in the realist worldview, is about balancing of nation-states to survive in an anarchical world. Thus, the main assumption of realism is that the anarchical world system requires the actorhood of sovereign states, which are rational and unitary. Balancing, in realism, involves states' efforts, either individually or in alliance with others, against a rising power or threat. As a result of this major assumption of realism, proponents of balance of power theory have not included NSAs in their analyses of balancing.

Firstly, it has been argued that the term implies a particular distribution of power among states; more accurately, only "among states." That the power of an NSA can affect the (dis)equilibrium, and thus shape the distribution of power in the system is obviously not envisaged in the theory. It is mostly the case since the majority of thinkers producing within the present boundaries of the theory still dislike

the idea that NSAs and nation-states can be treated on the same footing as far as power distribution is concerned. Put differently, there seems to be a twofold hierarchy of power concentration within the theory. At the top lie states with different power concentrations, positioned in order of size. Far below, and within the state-centric world likewise, are NSAs placed. The power relations of NSAs and states are surely connected to each other. In other words, NSAs can and do have an impact on the strength of certain states to some degree. Still, they can never alter the existing distribution of power drastically, for they are circumscribed by their inferior position in the state-centric system and thus relative powerlessness vis-à-vis states.

Secondly, the term is at times used in place of a balancing policy. Or balancing policy is used rather separately. Again, however it is used; balancing is an exceptionally inter-state phenomenon in the theory. On the one hand, it is equated with policy choices and behaviors of states. Thus certain possibilities, which are increasingly turning into realities, are overlooked. Today NSAs, as important players of global politics, can feel resentment towards the rise of a preponderant power and react on their discontent. They might be triggered by the very behaviors of that power and decide to engage in a balancing act. Their motivation might be more than a slight change in the foreign or domestic policy choices of a state. Some NSAs can act with grander ambitions such as ending the overall supremacy of a state and thus altering the power distribution in the system. This in turn makes it possible to label those NSAs as balancing actors. Yet, it is impossible to visualize such occurrences within the present boundaries of balance of power theory. On the other hand, as previously argued, there is a linkage between balancing policy and the system (policy adding to

the system). In other words, balancing among states plays a part in the existence of a balance of power system which in turn ensures the independence of states. But the other side of the coin is usually avoided among theorists. If balancing ensures states' independence, why cannot we assume that NSA balancing ensures the survival and independence of NSAs in a similar fashion? Is it not possible to argue that balancing against a state can be the only option for an NSA to survive?

Thirdly and finally, the balance of power is also used as a system ensuring the independence of states through several arrangements. Such a system is indeed all about states: The actors of the system are states; the means and rules of the system are laid down by states; the ends, to which these means serve, are again states. What balance of power theory fails to see, however, is that presently almost nothing is all about states. This holds true for balance of power systems as well. NSAs, which are seen as "external" actors in the theory, intervene in the "internal" operation of such systems.<sup>3</sup> By means of their distinctive characteristics, NSAs change the rules, means,

---

<sup>3</sup> This encroachment of "external" actors into the "internal" operation of balance of power dynamics is a crucial point for the purposes of this study and needs to be discussed much more in length. What I suggest by naming NSAs as external actors is that balancing is, within the confines of the traditional balance of power theory, an exceptionally inter-state policy behavior. Therefore, having a subordinate influence in the state-centric world, NSAs are seen as external actors for balance of power systems. The second part of my postulate is that these supposedly external actors intervene in the "internal" operation of balance of power systems. What I suggest by internal operation is no different than the definition of balance of power systems provided previously. Confronted with a preponderant power, states engage in balancing in order to guarantee their survival. That is, what lies at the core of the internal operation of balance of power systems is a balancing mechanism designed to ensure the independence of states. What I suggest by "intervention" or "encroachment" of external actors into the internal operations is that when NSAs balance against states they change balancing dynamics among states. A number of explanations and examples would develop this point further. First, when an NSA engages in balancing against a preponderant state, that particular state's rivals may be emboldened by this challenge, see this as an opportunity to start an all-out confrontation against its power, and engage in a different balancing on their own. Recent soft balancing attempts of both Russia and China against the United States exemplify this point. It can be argued that Al Qaeda's challenge against Washington opened a "window of opportunity" for Moscow and Beijing. Since these countries were long worried about uncontrolled American power in a unipolar world, they leapt at the opportunity of enhancing their balancing attempts; assuming that this is "the right time" to do so. A similar example can be Greece's intense balancing attempts against Turkey in the 1990s, when the latter was spending its time,



and ends of the game. In other words, they are integrated to such systems through their involvements whether states like it or not; and as in integrations of all kinds, they cause change and dynamism in the original system. What conclusion can we draw from this picture then? I shall briefly put it in one sentence: The boundaries of balance of power systems have expanded through the encroachment of NSAs which in fact come outside of the state-centric world. Lamentably, this idea is still some way off gaining acceptance in balance of power theory.

### **2.1.2. The Balancer**

In balance of power theory, one frequently comes across the terms ‘the balancer’ or ‘the holder of the balance.’ These terms imply a state’s role in maintaining the power equilibrium among states. More accurately, the balancer is a

---

resources and motivation for defeating the terrorist group PKK. Second, if NSA balancing proves to be putting a dent in the overall strength of a preponderant power, rival states may again conclude that the preponderant power is not that powerful and invincible. This calculation surely provides them additional courage to start balancing. The example above, increased soft balancing efforts of Russia and China against the U.S. relates to this point as well. Seeing that Americans – supposedly only superpower in the world – is unable to overcome an NSA and that the war on terror became a quagmire for them in which they bleed must have aroused their rivals’ interest in balancing. Third, response of the preponderant power against NSA balancing may indeed cause rival states to feel their security and/or top national interests in jeopardy. Believing that how the preponderant power deals with the challenger NSA may damage their current or potential political and/or economic interests, rival states may engage in balancing in an attempt to avoid this consideration. That is why Russia, China and a number of European states have expressed their resentment about the unilateral and aggressive policies of the United States in the war on terror. Many Russian officials, for example, argue that the United States aimed at asserting a complete hegemony in the Eurasian continent (and adding to its world hegemony by taking advantage of its oil resources) by invading Iraq partially under the context of the war on terror. Fourth, rival states may forge a genuine cooperation with the NSA and join its power, resources and motivation with those of the NSA. In other words, NSA balancing – even its mere eagerness to balance – may lead to a concerted balancing effort against the preponderant power. No one can today guarantee that some anti-American states such as Iran and North Korea will not forge a covert alliance with Jihadist groups. Fifth, NSA balancing can trigger balancing and balance of power designs of not only preponderant power’s rivals, but also those of the preponderant power itself. Today many contend that Iraq War was indeed a part of American world design. Put bluntly, the United States also leapt at the “opportunity” of Al Qaeda’s balancing attempts. By portraying their wars as a pursuit of terrorists, this argument runs, Washington tried to conceal their pursuit for hegemony. All these four points attest that NSAs which are considered outside balance of power systems are arguably the most likely actors to trigger traditional, state-to-state balancing dynamics and thus make important changes to the internal operation of those systems.

state that keeps itself aloof from alignments between opposing groups and intervenes in balance of power politics whenever the balance tilts in favor of one group. The nature of this intervention is rather simple. The balancer state always gives its support to the weaker group since its only aim is preserving the balance. That the ultimate goal of the balancer is preserving the equilibrium is of the utmost importance. This is why the balancer state should not let its individual relationships or ideological principles hamper its role of balancing. In short, the balancer in a way tries to regulate the balance of power among different states through its periodic interventions (Sheehan, 1996: 65-71; Morgenthau, 1985: 213-214).

The balancer epithet is most commonly attributed to the Great Britain during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Several reasons are put forward that qualified Britain for this task. For instance, its geographical position was quite suitable since Britain was relatively more secure against a possible invasion. What is more, it was not too much engaged in Continental politics. This factor helped Britain to ensure its uncommitted position (Wright, 1965: 758-759). It is also the same factors that are invoked to account for why other nations could not perform the balancer role. For example, it is argued that France under the rule of Louis XIV was ill suited for holding the balance in the earlier decade because it was in the middle of Continental power politics (Morgenthau, 1985: 214; see also Sheehan, 1996: 69-70).

### **2.1.3. The Mechanics of Balances and Balancing: An Automatic Process?**

One of the highly disputed problems of the balancing process and balances of power is whether they materialize automatically or not. For Waltz (1979: 119-120,

124-125), states have a natural tendency to engage in balancing in the anarchic system. Some states may purposely pursue such a policy while others may not. The crux of the matter is not whether states want to balance or not. They are in a way dragged into the process by systemic imperatives. Therefore, in Waltz's analysis, balancing and balances are mostly automatic processes. Morgenthau (1985: 187) also argues that balancing policies and the resultant balances are unavoidable: "The aspiration for power on the part of several nations, each trying either to maintain or overthrow the status quo, leads of necessity to a configuration that is called the balance of power and to policies that aim at preserving it. We say 'of necessity' advisedly."

The second explanation about the issue at hand is that balancing is a semi-automatic process. Claude (1962: 47-48) labels "the balancer" as the key figure in this conception. Namely, the automatism of the system is accompanied by deliberate diplomatic moves of the balancer. In short, what differentiates this conception from the automatic process is that there is an actor intentionally pursuing the objective of equilibrium.

The final explanation envisages contrived, or what Claude (1962) calls manually operated balances of power. In this conception, states view the balance of power as a concrete objective to be achieved. They consciously wish to attain equilibrium. Therefore, they react on this consciousness and follow balancing policies (Bull, 1995: 100-102; Claude, 1962: 48-50). Unlike the automatic conception, here "the balance of power is not something that just happens but something that is actively willed and maintained" (Wright quoted in Claude, 1962: 50). Unlike the

semi-automatic conception, here the balance of power is not willed only by the balancer but by the most of the states in the system (Claude, 1962: 50).

The problem about all these discussions is again exclusion of NSAs. What determines the automatism of balance of power politics is either states' (un)consciousness or the presence of the balancer. NSAs have unsurprisingly no role in this process. Thus several questions remain unanswered in the theory: What about the consciousness of an NSA? Is it not possible that a particular state's policies shape the political consciousness of NSAs? Even more essentially, is not there a possibility that an NSA, building on this consciousness, decides to come on to the field and actively seek balancing. I would rather answer these questions in the affirmative. A particular state's attitude towards a group of people or ideational entities such as a religion, an ethnic group, a unique way of life – all of which an NSA identifies itself with – could have a profound impact on its political consciousness. More precisely, an NSA may be established, or else may evolve, for protecting these entities which – it believes – are a part of who it is. It can then detect the threatening state and try to undermine its power, with a possible long-term goal of achieving a change in the distribution of power so that the threatening power would no longer pose a threat. All of these reveal the possibility that NSAs can alter the mechanics of balances and balancing. A NSA seeking a particular distribution of power, and engaging in balancing acts to precipitate this process, can shape the automatism or manual operation of the system.

## **2.2. Choosing to Balance or Not: Motivational Factors**

### **2.2.1. Why Do States Balance?**

Given that balancing is one of the central components of balance of power theory, it is of the utmost importance to concentrate on this critical question: What motivates states to balance against each other?

#### **2.2.1.1. Balancing Against Power**

In the (neo)realist perspective, there is a widely shared belief that states balance against the rising power of each other. To understand this interpretation, one should look at the core premises of the (neo)realist theory. States try to survive in an anarchical self-help system which is characterized by an endless power struggle. What is more, there is no superior agent above states that is authorized to regulate inter-state relations. Hence they can never be sure of the intentions of rivals. There is no guarantee that some states will not threaten the sovereignty of others. Put differently, there is “the ‘911’ problem – the absence of a central authority to which a threatened state can turn for help –” (Mearsheimer, 2001: 32). For these reasons, states have to rely on themselves in order to preserve their independence. Reacting on these concerns, they either increase their military and economic capabilities or search for alliances for more security (Waltz, 1979: 117-120). In other words, increasing power of a state is automatically equated with a threat to the security of others.

Arguably one of the most vital parts of this realist outlook is the demarcation of security and power concerns of states. It is through this difference that many theorists explain the balancing tendency of states:

In anarchy, security is the highest end. Only if survival is assured can states safely seek such other goals as tranquility, profit, and power. Because power is a means and not an end, states prefer to join the weaker of two coalitions. They cannot let power, a possibly useful means, become the end they pursue. The goal the system encourages them to seek is security. Increased power may or may not serve that end.... If states wished to maximize power, they would join the stronger side, and we would not see balances forming but a world hegemony forged. This does not happen because balancing, not bandwagoning, is the behaviour induced by the system. The first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their positions in the system (Waltz, 1979: 126).

Another characteristic feature of the traditional explanations is about the mechanics of the balancing process. It is believed that balancing generally materializes as a result of ceaseless power calculations. When a state rises in power, another is triggered to enhance its own power to thwart the ambitions of that particular state. This time this process gets reversed and puts pressure on the first state to increase its power again (Morgenthau, 1985: 193-196). In short, a power struggle in the form of a tit-for-tat routine characterizes balancing tendencies of states.

#### **2.2.1.2. Balancing against Threat**

This interpretation was considerably revised by Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory. For Walt (1985: 3-43), the argument that states balance against the rising power of each other is inadequate. Power considerations do matter, yet they are only one part of the big picture. There are several factors that increase the possibility

of balancing such as aggregate power, proximity, offensive capabilities and intentions. Therefore, balancing is more likely against a state which (1) has more aggregate power reflected in terms of economic and military capabilities, population, technological advance and so forth; (2) is in closer proximity; (3) has superior offensive military capabilities; and (4) has aggressive intentions and thus provokes other states. Why these factors trigger balancing in Walt's theory is that they make a particular state more threatening, not more powerful. As such, states balance against threatening rather than powerful states (for further elaboration, see below).

Walt's formulation of balancing against threat surely differs from that of balancing against power argument. However, a critical point seems to be underlying the gist of both of these balancing motivations. Be it against merely the rising power of a state or against a threatening one, balancing is mostly about the resentment of a particular distribution of power and the attempt to change that distribution. Assume that state A is threatened by state B which meets the last three conditions above but lacks the first one; which is not very powerful in aggregate terms but close to state A and has some sort of offensive capabilities and intentions. Reacting on its fears, state A engages in balancing against state B. Even in this case, the ultimate goal of state A is to change power distribution in such a way that state B can no longer pose a threat for it.

### **2.2.2. Why Do States Not Balance?**

#### **2.2.2.1. Seeking More Profits and Fewer Costs**

A search for more profits – whether political or economic – is the first factor put forward that shape states' occasional choices of not balancing. An important aspect of this factor has relevance with the term bandwagoning. It would be of use to explore the meaning of this term in order to better explain its relevance to considerations of profit maximization.

For Walt (1985: 4), balancing and bandwagoning are two opposite alliance choices: “...states may either balance (ally in opposition to the principal source of danger) or bandwagon (ally with the state that poses the major threat).” The cornerstone of this interpretation is that both choices are responses to be more secure. Waltz (1979: 126) also claims that balancing and bandwagoning are “in sharp contrast”; the latter referring to joining the stronger side. Randall Schweller (1994), a theorist who wrote extensively on the balance of power, criticizes these depictions of bandwagoning. Building on his critique, he explains why states bandwagon more often than neorealists assume.

For Schweller (1994), balancing and bandwagoning have completely different motivations. States may prefer bandwagoning over balancing in order to maximize their gains:

...the concept of bandwagoning has been defined too narrowly-as giving in to threats-as if it were simply the opposite of balancing. In practice, however, states have very different reasons to choose balancing or bandwagoning. The aim of balancing is self-preservation and the protection of values already possessed, while the goal of bandwagoning is usually self-extension: to obtain values coveted. Simply put, balancing is driven by the desire to avoid losses; bandwagoning by the opportunity for gain (Schweller, 1994: 74).

Putting “the search for more” argument aside, balancing is a costly behavior on its own. First, states make a special effort to counter the preponderant power. They



“have to” make a special effort since they are already weaker than the other side. Second, in the case of a possible war, the odds are heavily against great powers that are balancing, again because of their relative weakness (Fritz & Sweeney, 2004: 288). Therefore, it is argued that states prefer balancing only as a last resort, when they face existential threats to their survival (Schweller, 1994: 93).

Finally, the notion of economic interdependence of actors can be placed within this category as well. The argument is that states have highly complex and entrenched economic linkages which are ever-increasingly growing. One outcome of this process is marginalization of a longstanding idea; that international politics is indeed a zero-sum game. Therefore, when a powerful state’s strength is undermined, it might have a far-reaching economic impact on the state that considers balancing against it. This consideration can prevent states engaging in balancing behaviors (Nye, 1993: 56; see also Mansfield and Pollins, 2003). Apparently, what lies at the core of this consideration is avoiding economic costs.

#### **2.2.2.2. Intrastate Problems**

Waltz (2000: 38-39) also acknowledges that economic considerations may incline some states towards bandwagoning. Yet, for him, why states prefer bandwagoning does not show the inadequacy of the structural theory. Rather, this choice can be understood through a state-level analysis. Waltz claims that balancing and bandwagoning are two different strategies with the common goal of survival; and there is no rule in the structural theory that states will choose balancing over bandwagoning at all times. For him, the answer lies within policy

choices of states: “States sometimes blunder when trying to respond sensibly to both internal and external pressures” (Waltz, 1997: 915).<sup>4</sup> Structures shape but do not totally determine the behaviors of states. Policy makers make volitional choices and yet they pay the price of their actions which ignore structural pressures (Waltz, 1997: 915). In short, domestic political mistakes are responsible for states’ departure from balancing behaviors.

The second aspect of intrastate factors is the accountability of governments to their people. The argument is that since balancing is a costly and very demanding process, governments are likely to have a hard time in justifying their balancing acts to their public. This awareness in turn can thwart their intentions of balancing (Fritz & Sweeney, 2004: 288).

### **2.2.2.3. Threat Perceptions**

In this question, “threat perceptions” come into play once again. In fact, most arguments that deviate from the “balancing against material capabilities (e.g. military or economic power)” belief have one point in common: How others perceive you is of the utmost importance in international politics. More importantly, power is only one of the factors others take into consideration in their perceptions. “The motives, morals, and purposes of the superior”, its “identity” in other words, plays an important role in shaping others’ responses (Claude, 1962: 64). Threat perception is then a twofold sword. Certain characteristics of some states may threaten others and provoke adverse reactions. On the other hand, those same characteristics may

---

<sup>4</sup> Waltz seems to leave out very weak and very secure states from this general argument. He argues that very weak states, despite their own attempts, are not capable of obtaining adequate security for them. Bandwagoning might at times be an opportunity for such states.

contribute to closer bonds and amicable relations between preponderant powers and other states. Even if some states are quite powerful, their power may not necessarily pose a threat to others.<sup>5</sup> For example, similar interests, ideological affinities, and common identities with preponderant states can hinder a possible balancing process (Fritz & Sweeney, 2004: 288-289).

#### **2.2.2.4. Power Considerations**

In addition to threat perceptions, power considerations are also invoked in both pro and anti-balancing arguments. As far as the latter is concerned, the general idea is that states may hesitate to engage in balancing because they are unsure if they can gather adequate balancing force and capabilities even after joining their power. They may not, in other words, believe that balancing will pay dividends because the hegemon is already so powerful. This is why, for Walt (2005: 126), major powers are unwilling to start an alliance against Washington since “its military capabilities would still trail the United States by a wide margin, and it would be plagued by the rifts and

---

<sup>5</sup> This point is an important ingredient of the balance of threat formulation of Walt and frequently cited in debates regarding the absence of balancing forces against the United States, especially in the post-Cold War era. Robert Pape (2005: 18-21) for example argues that the answer of why major powers did not attempt to balance against the United States for decades lies in the latter’s foreign policy choices and the impact of these choices on other states’ perceptions. Namely, Washington usually took a relatively non-aggressive foreign policy line in the system. It did not, for example, try to encroach upon other major powers and build an empire resembling those of earlier centuries. Therefore, it had a “reputation for benign intent.” A similar argument is presented by T.V. Paul (2005: 52-64) who argues that hard balancing against the United States was not necessary in the post-Cold War years. Washington was not confronted with a counterbalancing coalition since second-tier major powers did not see it as a direct threat to their existence. Robert Kagan (2004: 71) suggests that although some major European allies of Washington are quite concerned about the unchecked American power, they made no attempt of hard balancing because American power “does not imperil Europe’s security or even its autonomy.” Finally, Keir A. Lieber and Gerard Alexander (2005: 133-135) oppose the idea that American policies after September 11, and more importantly after the onset of Iraq War, have hastened balancing attempts of other powers. For Lieber and Alexander, Washington is not threatening for other major powers. On the contrary, what threatens the United States is identical to what threatens these powers: nuclear proliferation and global terrorism. Therefore, these shared threats account for other major states’ support for Washington, let alone efforts to counterbalance.

uncertainties that habitually undermine alliance cohesion.” In a similar fashion, Brooks and Wohlforth (2002: 20-33) argue that current American power (not only in military but also economic and technological terms) is one of the most significant reasons why other major players such as China or the European Union cannot balance against the United States. Washington has such a massive power that other actors are unable to bridge the wide gap of capabilities in the foreseeable future. Other major powers are also aware of this, and it is this awareness – *inter alia* – that prevent them to balance against the United States.

Another aspect of this issue relates to weak states. Walt (1987: 173-174) argues that weak states have a greater tendency than strong powers to engage in bandwagoning. These states do not consider engaging in balancing for the simple reason that they are exposed to the pressures of outside powers and can hardly act independently to determine their fortunes.

### **2.2.3. Balancing as a Non-Statist Activity**

One of the primary purposes of this thesis is to demonstrate the need for balance of power theory to surpass its state-centric boundaries and cover up the new context of world politics. However one chooses to support this argument, looking at the theory through non-state-centric lenses is crucial, indeed a *sine qua non*. It is the only way one can realize the new script and cast of balance of power dynamics. This general guideline can be properly applied to the question of balancing motivations as well.

Although only states are seen as actors engaged in balancing in the theory, balancing is a social human activity and thus can not just be reduced into a statist level. It is a part of daily life for individuals, institutions as well as other non-state entities. As a matter of fact, it is one of the most commonly employed human conducts in relationships; be it a father-son, employer-employee, or an environmental NGO-polluter corporation relationship. An example from school years may be pertinent here. It is known that bullying is a serious problem in many schools in the United States. Assume that an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student is being bullied by a 12<sup>th</sup> grader at school. The latter is naturally much stronger than the former. The options available to this 8<sup>th</sup> grader who feels threatened and vulnerable are manifold. He can, for instance, try “soft” measures such as simply talking to the 12<sup>th</sup> grader and asking him to stop his harassment. Or else he can try to make more friends and always hang out with them in order not to be alone at any time. He can also talk to his teacher and in a way takes a shelter in the strongest actor in the school. At the end of the day, all these behaviors are merely strategies for more security. As previously mentioned, such examples can be found in a variety of relationships whereby a weaker party is threatened by a stronger one. The conclusion, then, is that a statist outlook – based on the idea that only states can be motivated into balancing – does balance of power theory a disservice.

#### **2.2.4. Motivational Factors in the case of NSAs**

If balancing motivations should not be reserved only for states, two questions discussed above – why states balance or not – are inadequate in portraying

contemporary developments in world politics. The same factors that are believed to prompt states to balance can be applied to NSAs as well. However, balance of power theory avoids the question of “why NSAs balance or why not.”

One reason for this avoidance can be the argument that the motivations that set off state balancing do not have any applicability to NSAs. Yet I believe that this is hardly the case.

The first argument is that states balance against the rising power of another state. This neorealist proposition is apparently related to the survival of states. In other words, the rising power of a state has to be contained since it might prove to be an existential threat for another nation. Is not it possible that an NSA engages in balancing on account of the same fear? One might argue that NSAs do not need to fear the increasing power of states since concepts such as independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty do not make sense for their structures. Yet it is this point that takes us to the balance of threat argument.

For an NSA to engage in balancing, it is not imperative that a state directly threatens its physical existence (e.g. a great power initiating a massive military campaign in order to destroy a terrorist organization). Many violent NSAs identify their existence with certain societies, ideologies, values and so forth. The power of a state can threaten these notions to such an extent that NSAs may feel no option other than balancing; since it might be these notions that are the life blood of NSAs. Considering themselves as the bastion of certain people or beliefs, NSAs may have all the motivation to balance against a state. In the case of Al Qaeda, for instance, there is a group of Jihadis who claim to be protecting the entire Muslim world, their

religion Islam, and their Islamic way of life and culture. For Jihadis, there is almost no point in living unless all of the Muslims – with their religion as well as their way of life – are secure. Joining their movement in order to ensure this security, then, is an individual duty for all Muslims. In their eyes, dying for this cause is even the most valuable award a Muslim can get in this life.

This analysis displays a crucial novelty in balance of power dynamics. It appears that the nature of what is considered to be under threat and secured has been gradually changing. In other words, unlike in interstate balancing, there is a *deterritorial constituency* definition in NSA balancing. What an NSA (e.g. Al Qaeda) tries to secure (e.g. Muslims spread all over the world, Islam, and Islamic way of life) transcends over a particular piece of land designated by territorial frontiers. The challenge therefore should not be seen as merely directed against a nation-state (the United States) but also against an overall hegemony (American hegemony). However, balance of power theorists turn a blind eye to this challenge because attempts to secure such transnational constituencies do not fit into balance of power dynamics in the state-centric world.

In effect, the question of why states do not balance contributes even more to the potential of NSA balancing. The difficulties that states experience in balancing are less likely to affect NSAs. Economic costs, internal political problems, pressure from outside powers, and the dilemma of interdependence have either no relevance for NSAs or can be surmounted more easily on account of the structure and identity of these actors. In other words, NSAs do not have most of the obligations that limit

states by virtue of their “nonstateness.” Therefore, all these factors that prevent balancing make less sense for them.

All things considered, it is fair to conclude that NSAs have a number of motivations to balance against states. Opening up this issue to NSAs once more accentuates the need of a revised balance of power theory.

### **2.3. Balancing Types**

States deploy a number of techniques in balancing. The diversification of these techniques they use leads to different types of balancing. As Paul (2004) suggests, these can be broadly grouped as: hard balancing, soft balancing, and asymmetric balancing.<sup>6</sup>

#### **2.3.1. Hard Balancing**

Hard balancing is a technique involving traditional military means. States which use this technique are generally believed to pursue a change in a particular military balance of power. Therefore, it is most frequently observed in regions where conflict is the rule rather than the exception in interstate relations (Paul, 2004: 3).

Hard balancing has two major types: Military buildup (coupled with an improvement of economic and technological capabilities) and alliances (Waltz, 1979: 117). First, states can balance other powers through an armament policy. By trying to build a formidable arsenal, they expect to deter aggressive powers in the system. These armaments may be acquired through internal efforts/domestic manufacture or

---

<sup>6</sup> In fact asymmetric balancing is reckoned with only recently, and by only a few political scientists. The bulk of the studies on balancing act deals simply with hard and soft balancing.



through arms transfers from outside powers. Second, states connect themselves to a web of alliance systems which are mostly of military nature. These alliances can materialize in two ways: either by strengthening and enlarging one's own alliance system or by weakening the opponent alliance systems (Waltz, 1979: 117). Yet both serve one interest; decreasing the vulnerability of states in the face of external threats. Weakening the opponents alliance systems can occur by different means as well. States inflict a considerable damage to the other side if they can detach some states from that alliance. Alternatively, they can undermine the opposition by ending the expectations of them to acquire new members (Hartmann, 1978: 333-337).

Finally, it is important to note that several authors present another technique of balancing, which in deed could be situated in hard balancing; that is territorial acquisitions (Morgenthau, 1985: 199-200; Hartmann, 1978: 329-331). Yet, since this seems to be an anachronistic method, it is more appropriate to exclude it from commonly accepted hard balancing methods and rather consider it separately. Up until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, territories were used in managing power distributions among states. Especially in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, states engaged in atrocious wars to possess new territories and thus strengthen their power. Napoleon of France and Frederick the Great of Prussia are some examples altering the European balance of power through their acquisitions (Hartmann, 1978: 330). However, balancing through territories was not always brutal and bloody. At times, great powers settled the power distribution problem through common consent, such as carving up and sharing particular countries amicably. Poland, which was divided by its neighbors in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, is a key example. Austria, Prussia and Russia reached a

compromise among themselves and divided the country up. They wanted to eliminate the possibility that one of them could acquire Poland on its own and tilt the balance in its favor in Europe (Morgenthau, 1985: 199). Preserving the balance through territorial gains gradually shifted to another area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This time, great powers found themselves in colonizing the African continent (Morgenthau, 1985: 200; Hartmann, 1978: 330-331). For a number of reasons, expecting an advantage in balance of power politics by territorial annexations seems less viable today. Not only territorial interstate wars occur less, but also significance of territory as a source of power is highly questioned in contemporary politics.

### **2.3.2. Soft Balancing**

The second balancing type in balance of power theory is soft balancing. Unlike hard balancing, this method usually involves non-military strategies. Although soft balancing actions might be less effective than those of hard balancing in directly confronting a hegemon's military supremacy<sup>7</sup>, they can have strikingly adverse repercussions for the hegemon (Pape, 2005: 17).

As a matter of fact, it is generally argued that soft balancing is a method shaped by, and thus characterizing, the unipolar world of the post-Cold War era. Thus it is no accident that political scientists have researched on this concept only in recent years. Pape's study is arguably the most comprehensive and insightful analysis casting light on the term. Pape (2005: 36-37) argues that soft balancing has four

---

<sup>7</sup> The difference between soft and hard balancing is obvious to many political theorists. But one of the boldest expressions of it is presented by Stephen Walt. Walt (2005: 126) suggests that unlike hard balancing which aims a drastic change in the power distribution on the whole, "soft balancing does not seek or expect to alter the overall distribution of capabilities" and rather "accepts the current balance of power but seeks to obtain better outcomes within it."

major measures: territorial denial, entangling diplomacy, economic strengthening, and signals of resolve to balance. Territorial denial involves a state's refusal of another state's request to use its territory for military operations. By diplomatic means, states try to hinder a particular state's military actions and force it to shelve its plans by creating domestic dissent. In this process, most of the time international institutions come into play as forums of interstate cooperation. The strategy of economic strengthening speaks for itself. It is used to create economic arrangements, such as trading blocs, with the purpose of gaining the upper hand in economic terms vis-à-vis a particular state. Lastly, signals of resolve to balance imply a display of resistance to the impositions of the preponderant power. Balancing states can show their perseverance in defying the intentions of a preponderant state if they can collaborate regularly and increase mutual trust among themselves.

One of the prevalent examples given to show soft balancing is several states' cooperative efforts to thwart the American invasion of Iraq in 2003.<sup>8</sup> In the period preceding the war, France, Germany, and Russia tried to shun the American intention through diplomatic bargaining – including but not limited to veto power – at the United Nations (Pape, 2005: 38-39; Nye, 2004: 26-27; Paul, 2005: 64-65). France also carried out intense diplomatic efforts in the European Union. President Jacques Chirac tried to persuade European countries in pressuring Washington for the peaceful settlement of the issue (Paul, 2005: 67). What is more, such diplomatic movements – accompanied by the activities of global peace organizations – increased the consciousness about the threat of American hegemony. This, in turn, made

---

<sup>8</sup> For another example, Russian and Chinese efforts against the American-led NATO operation on Yugoslavia in 1999; see Paul (2005: 59-64).

statesmen think twice about supporting the United States (Nye, 2004: 27). Last but not least, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, exemplifying the territorial denial method, declined Washington's request to use their territories in land operations (Pape, 2005: 39; Nye, 2004: 27).

All in all, it is argued that soft balancing has quite effective implications for the power that is challenged. In the first place, soft balancing measures can dramatically increase the military costs of the preponderant power. By pushing the preponderant power to alter its plans and strategies, soft balancing countries can cause great suffering for it, both in economic terms and human lives (Pape, 2005: 41). In the second place, soft balancing attempts cast doubt on the legitimacy of unilateral and interventionist policies of preponderant powers (Paul, 2005: 59; 69). This delegitimization process can in turn undercut the soft power of such countries (Nye, 2004: 26). In the third place, balancing countries can extend the range and diversity of their soft balancing measures in order to press harder (Pape, 2005: 42). In the final place, according to the responses of the preponderant power, soft balancing measures can yield to hard balancing strategies in time (Pape, 2005: 42; Paul, 2004: 3; see also Walt, 2005: 129-130 for a very similar argument).

In addition to the appeal of these considerations, there are other reasons why several authors argue that soft balancing will be increasingly preferred over hard balancing. Paul (2004: 15-16), for example, presents several conditions which make resisting to American power by soft balancing more appropriate in the post-Cold War era:

Thus the conditions that have made it impossible for hard balancing to occur are encouraging concerned major powers to resort to low-cost soft-balancing

strategies in dealing with the American power. These conditions are as follows:

1. The near-unipolarity since the end of the Cold War
2. The increasing economic globalization, the engine of which has largely been the U.S.-based multinational corporations
3. The common enemy of transnational terrorism, which challenges not only the United States but the other major players as well
4. The difficulty of rapidly translating economic wealth into military power
5. The value of free-riding and buck-passing, especially for the European and Asian allies in the general security and economic protection that Washington offers

Hard balancing, in other words, can prove to be very costly for a country – both in economic and political terms – which is dissatisfied about the rising American power but which also has key economic and political ties with Washington. Soft balancing would then seem to be the golden mean. On the one hand, it is less likely to provoke the preponderant power and thus damage the political and economic status of the balancing state. On the other hand, it is a challenge showing resentment about the preponderance of a nation.

Finally, Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth (2005: 79-80) ardently oppose the idea that the United States will be increasingly constrained by soft balancing. They argue that the problem with the analyses of soft balancing is conflating the term with bargaining. For Brooks and Wohlforth, states sometimes engage in policies, which constrain the United States. Yet these policies are by no means motivated by a threat of American preponderance. They rather stem from other considerations, which are usual components of their relations with Washington. More precisely, states may oppose American policies: (1) in order to maximize their economic interests, (2) in order to deal with regional security concerns, (3) if they consider certain American policies “ill suited to the problem at hand or otherwise

inappropriate” (p.80), (4) when certain politicians wish to take advantage of anti-Americanism in domestic politics. These are all usual bargaining policies, not attempts to restrain the American preponderance. Lieber and Alexander (2005: 130-133) follow a similar line of reasoning. They argue that there seems to be no criteria to differentiate between usual “diplomatic frictions” and what theorists call soft balancing, both in conceptual and empirical terms.

### **2.3.3. Asymmetric Balancing**

Asymmetric balancing is the latest term used in an attempt to expand the boundaries of balancing concept. In both hard and soft balancing techniques, states are believed to be the only actors. That is to say, both of these imply merely interstate balancing processes. Asymmetric balancing, on the other hand, brings subnational actors into play. Paul (2004: 3, 16) presents a dual expression of this method. Asymmetric balancing can refer to attempts of states to balance against subnational actors such as terrorist organizations. Conversely, it may refer to balancing attempts of subnational actors – and their state sponsors – through the use of nontraditional, asymmetric means.

One of the few authors dealing with this issue, Christopher Layne (2004: 108-109) argues that terrorist groups can not balance against a hegemon due to a number of reasons. Most critical of them is that balancing requires adequate military and economic capabilities which would enable an actor to challenge the hegemon. Since other major powers, not terrorist organizations, have the necessary capabilities, it is only the former that can form a counter power against the hegemon. It became clear,

for instance, throughout the American war on terror that military capabilities of the United States and a terrorist group such as Al Qaeda are almost incomparable. Therefore, for Layne, the damage that terrorists can inflict on the hegemon is quite limited. They can make the hegemon suffer, both in human lives and in economic terms. Yet, they can not shatter the ground on which the hegemon is placed.

Finally, Lieber and Alexander (2005: 138) express their doubt whether the term asymmetric balancing reflects the nature of balancing. It is generally accepted that the essence of balancing is to react on the preponderant power's moves with the purpose of preserving security. More precisely, balancing is a defensive reaction. Yet, the argument runs, the purpose of terrorist groups or rogue states with weapons of mass destruction seems beyond defending themselves. Therefore, the term asymmetric balancing is deficient in explaining the behavior of these actors.

#### **2.3.4. Asymmetric Balancing in the Context of Balance of Power Theory**

There is a wide gap about asymmetric balancing in the balance of power literature. To a significant extent, this gap can be explained by the place of asymmetric balancing within balance of power theory. The notion of an NSA balancing against a major power seems far from being appreciated by many theorists. There are only a few scholars referring to this issue and some of them dismiss the merits of it at the outset.

As shown above, in addition to the question of motivation, one commonly raised argument is that NSAs are not capable actors of balancing. They do not have necessary military muscles, let alone adequate material resources to hold up the

military assets in order to balance against a preponderant power. This argument fails to take three counter points into account.

First of all, NSAs may not have the economic and military capabilities that states possess. However, this does not, and should not, obscure a crucial point. Such traditional capabilities may be prerequisite and adequate only in interstate power relations of the state-centric world. NSAs transcend this web of state-to-state relationships due to their place in the multi-centric world. They play the game according to the rules of the transnational world. Hence they mostly resort to nontraditional assets and capabilities. Arguably the simplest example is asymmetric warfare tactics they use. Furthermore, they exploit every advantage of the globalized world to offset their disadvantages in traditional military capabilities. In short, they are the actors of a different world and take their power and vigor from this world.

Secondly, in an age of small-sized nuclear devices with unprecedented destructive potential, the question of capabilities appears to be rather irrelevant. The fact that VNSAs, except for a few examples, could not use nuclear weapons to date does not necessarily mean that they are not likely to do so in the foreseeable future. In contrast, many specialists argue today that some terrorist groups are on the verge of acquiring some sort of nuclear devices; either through self-manufacturing or theft and assistance from some states.

Third and last of all, NSAs may not directly, and only by themselves, end the great power or hegemon status of a state. What is overlooked in the theory however is the possible snowball effect of these NSA balancing attempts. Balancing is not an isolated behavior conducted in some abstract space. It is a strategic behavior, which



elicits a response from different actors, most notably from the preponderant power who is being balanced. Therefore, the context in which balancing takes place and responses of states in the aftermath carry substantial weight. The consequences of an NSA balancing behavior can develop to such an extent that balancing proves to be beyond “merely undermining” economic or political power of a state. On the one hand, as previously mentioned, if the balancing behaviour of an NSA proves to be effective and serious, it may galvanize other states into action; with a possibility of these states engaging in balancing against the preponderant power as well. It may, in other words, trigger balancing dynamics in the state-centric world. On the other hand, initial response of the preponderant power to the NSA that challenges it is of the utmost importance. That a non-state entity “dares” balance against a “much stronger” nation-state with incomparable advantages in material terms may bring emotional factors (e.g. national pride, a sense of humiliation) into play more easily. Reacting on these sentiments with impulsive decisions, the preponderant power may end up being entangled in a larger series of problems. More important, it becomes entangled not only in the state-centric world which it is accustomed to, but in the multi-centric world which has different rules and procedures. This is because NSA balancing is based on a trap of pulling states into the multi-centric world where asymmetric warfare is conducted. Tragically, almost all states “have to” fall into this trap since it is almost impossible to succeed over an NSA by simply sticking in the state-centric world. This dilemma, then, brings about unexpected adversities for states that are not familiar to the multi-centric world as NSAs are. In short, adverse implications of an

NSA balancing are likely to form a large snowball that creates almost the same impact of a state-to-state balancing.

To conclude this part, it can be argued that omitting NSAs from balance of power dynamics for the reason that they are incapable of balancing against powerful states makes no sense. For one thing, they are not weak in non-statist terms. For another thing, they balance in a non-state manner simply because they are not states and they come from a different world. The fact that they are not balancing in a statist way does not mean that they are not balancing at all.

#### **2.4. Functions/Merits of the Balance of Power**

The balance of power (as a system, an approximate equilibrium in power distribution, or a balancing policy) has been both acclaimed and condemned among balance of power theorists. Yet aside from judgmental opinions, the balance of power is believed to have served several functions throughout history.

Perhaps the mostly raised function is preserving the independence of states through history in various international systems. The argument is straightforward: Balancing strategies kept potential disturbers of the power distribution in check. Thereby, states could ensure their survival with the prevention of a power which could otherwise swallow them up (Bull, 1995: 102; Wight and Porter, 1991: 166; Morgenthau, 1985: 194). This point brings us to the next function of the balance of power; that is the balance of power helped preservation of the anarchic system composed of independent states. It is evident that the balance of power could not preserve the independence of each and every state to date. Some states were even

sacrificed by others on account of balance of power considerations.<sup>9</sup> Poland's division between Austria, Russia, and Prussia is a classic example at this point. However, what endured at the end of the day was the anarchic state system (Nye, 1993: 49-50). The third function of the balance of power was to establish the ground on which international law could exist (Bull, 1995: 102; Wight and Porter, 1991: 167). It is argued that wide disparities in the distribution of power could incline some powerful states to violate the laws. In the words of Lassa Oppenheim:

If the Powers cannot keep one another in check, no rules of law will have any force, since an over-powerful state will naturally try to act according to discretion and disobey the law. As there is not and never can be a central political authority above the sovereign states that could enforce the rules of the Law of Nations, a balance of power must prevent any member of the Family of Nations from becoming omnipotent (Oppenheim quoted in Wight and Porter, 1991: 167).

Finally, it is noteworthy to discuss arguably the most contentious function of the balance of power; whether it helps preserving peace or not. A.F.K. Organski (1990; 283-286) is an eminent thinker who is highly critical of the argument that the balance of power brings out peace. For Organski, the converse is more plausible to accept: periods of the balance of power are characterized by wars. He argues that nations should be classified into two groups; the powerful and satisfied, and the powerful and dissatisfied. When there is a roughly equilibrium of power between different nations, the argument runs, the latter group of nations can be emboldened to initiate wars against the former. For they hope to be successful in such a war. Yet if

---

<sup>9</sup> Sheehan (1996: 73-74) makes a differentiation between weak and powerful states at this point. For Sheehan, weak states, rather than great powers, were victims of such considerations. Balance of power systems did not protect the weak states as much as it protected the great powers since it was the existence of great powers that was necessary for the operation of these systems. Sheehan further argues that this factor raised weak states' doubts about the merits of balance of power systems and often inclined them to behave in contrary to the essentials of balancing.

the powerful and status-quo nations have preponderance in power, dissatisfied nations cannot dare initiate a military offensive. Thus, the balance of power is likely to lead to wars while preponderance of satisfied powers brings peace.

There is another line of reasoning which perceives wars as an embedded component of balance of power politics. It is argued that war is necessary for the continuation of the balance of power since there are many occasions where the power of a threatening nation can be curtailed only by means of war (Bull, 1995: 103; see also Claude, 1962: 54). Morgenthau and Nye even imply that these occasions are the rule rather than the exception in the balance of power. While Morgenthau (1985: 230) argues that “most of the wars that have been fought since the beginning of the modern state system have their origin in the balance of power”, Nye (1993: 49) underlines the fact that balance of power was inadequate to prevent 119 wars over five centuries in which great powers took part.

Yet it is essential to note another common view about the issue at hand. The balance of power can, it is argued, lead to war or peace. However its principal function has nothing to do with keeping peace or not. The balance of power operates so as to preserve the independence of states. Therefore, war is regarded as an ordinary occurrence in the system (see Friedrich von Gentz’s views in Gabriel, 1994: 33; see also Levy, 2004: 31-32).

The ostensible relationship between interstate wars and the balance of power gave a normative value to the term as well. Woodrow Wilson is one of the most known figures who had an aversion to the idea of the balance of power. For one thing, balance of power politics was unsuccessful in preserving peace according to Wilson.

For another thing, based on self-seeking and clandestine practices, it represented a morally inappropriate type of politics (Claude, 1962: 75-87).<sup>10</sup>

The arguments about the relationship between the balance of power and war/peace are not limited to critical judgments. Several thinkers believe that, though not one of its primary functions, throughout history the balance of power helped in the creation of a system conducive to absence of wars. It is admitted that war might sometimes be inevitable for the preservation of the balance. However, in general, balance of power politics decreases the motivation and inclination of states to initiate wars on each other (Bull, 1995: 103; see also Claude, 1962: 54). Wolfers (1962: 120-121) makes an additional case that the balance of power is at least preferable to other power management policies such as collective security. For Wolfers, an equal distribution of power, through checks and balances, keep nations under control. However, in the collective security system, balance is tilted in favor of the so-called “peace-loving nations”, with the expectation that they would penalize potential aggressors. Yet this expectation never materializes since states have a proclivity to abuse their power when they have more of it. Consequently, peace is more likely to be in jeopardy in such a system.

The analysis above clearly shows that in balance of power theory, war and peace are two phenomena shaped by balance of power politics. Yet, they materialize through roles and behaviors of only states within the system. It is not envisaged that certain balances of power can affect NSAs’ inclination towards balancing. Nor is it pictured that when an NSA engages in balance of power politics, it can turn

---

<sup>10</sup> It is generally accepted that Wilson was indeed profoundly influenced by Kantian thinkers who revealed their discontent with the term by writing extensively on the issue. For arguments of Kantian thinkers on the balance of power, see Wight and Porter (1991: 173-179).

war/peace considerations upside down; and that NSA balancing can at times determine whether balance of power brings peace or war. Al Qaeda's challenge against the United States *per se* clearly illustrates these possibilities. The issue will be dealt in length in the following chapters, but several reminders can be raised at this point. What were the implications of Al Qaeda's balancing against the United States which largely stemmed from its dissatisfaction of the global distribution of power? The United States "declared war" on Afghanistan. Following that, it once again "declared war" on Iraq using Iraq's non-existent weapons of mass destruction as a pretext. Above everything else, President George Bush "declared war" on terror. Therefore, what we have witnessed in this decade as a result of an NSA balancing is two major wars in the state-centric world and a war on an age-old concept.

## **2.5. Inadequacy of the Balance of Power in Theory and Practice**

Prior to my concluding analysis about balance of power theory, it would be helpful to explore a few additional arguments in the literature that point out the inadequacy of the balance of power, both in theoretical and practical terms.

To begin with, it is argued that measurement of power in balance of power politics is rather problematic. In various forms of the theory, power is taken for granted as possession of certain resources (Baldwin, 2002: 182). Military supplies, territories, and – though to a lesser extent – wealth are the mostly invoked factors in power considerations. But even Morgenthau (1985: 223-224) concedes the point that there is hardly a clear-cut yardstick that can measure and compare the power of states:

But does the power of a nation actually repose in the extension of its territory? Is a nation the more powerful the more territory it possesses?... While

geography, of which territorial expansion is a part, is indeed a factor that goes into the making of national power, it is but one among other factors.

National character and, above all, national morale and the quality of government, especially in the conduct of foreign affairs, are the most important, but also the most elusive, components of national power. It is impossible for the observer of the contemporary scene or the explorer of future trends to assess even with approximate accuracy the relative contributions these elements may make to the power of different nations. Furthermore, the quality of these contributions is subject to incessant change, unnoticeable at the moment the change actually takes place and revealed only in the actual test of crisis and war. Rational calculation of the relative strength of several nations, which is the very lifeblood of the balance of power, becomes a series of guesses the correctness of which can be ascertained only in retrospect.

As far as power is concerned, then, it can be argued that – even without excluding NSAs from all these discussions – power and capacity issues are far from being crystal clear. Or in a more accurate way, the balance of power needs to be modified in its conception of power as well. Baldwin neatly discusses two different interpretations of power which were dominant in certain eras. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, he argues, “elements of national power” approach was designed which equalized power with possessions of states such as “population, territory, wealth, armies, and navies” (Baldwin, 2002: 178). This approach began to lose its ascendancy in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a new one called “relational power” was designed. In this approach, power is seen as a relationship in which actors make a change in the behaviors of others; such as changes in their “beliefs, attitudes, opinions, expectations, emotions and/or predispositions to act” (Baldwin, 2002: 178). With this new approach, the idea that power is a multidimensional concept gained currency as well. The questions of on what issues (e.g. economic, military) an actor is powerful (scope of power); how many actors it can influence or on which parts of the world it

can reflect its power (domain of power); to what extent it is likely that an actor will really affect the behavior of another (weight of power); how much it costs for an actor to have an affect on the other (costs of power); and through which means (e.g. symbolic, economic, military, diplomatic) an actor can influence another (means of power) gained importance (Baldwin, 2002: 178-179). It was increasingly realized that these five dimensions had to be considered before reaching a conclusion about the power of an actor.

However, Baldwin (2002: 182) underlines the fact that for balance of power theory to make sense, it had to take into account the elements of national power approach rather than the relational power since multiple dimensions of the latter discussed above would make it impossible to “calculate the net effect on the overall balance of power.” This would, in turn, render the theory unreasonable. Therefore, in balance of power theory, power has been regarded as a state possession. To clear the measurement problem even in this previously mentioned traditional understanding, power has usually been narrowed down to “military force conceived in the context of war-winning capability” (Baldwin, 2002: 182).

In a nutshell, the nature of power is changing alongside the nature of world politics in general. However, by closing the doors to multiple features of power, balance of power theory once again falls short of sustaining its relevance in contemporary global politics. Two specific reasons stand out among others. Firstly, balance of power theorists cannot keep taking only and only military power into account. For one thing, in contemporary politics, an actor’s share in present distribution of power can not be determined only by its possessions like territory,



army or wealth. Put differently, more possessions *per se* do not indicate more leverage in practical terms. Combination of an empirical evaluation of an actor's "power-as-resources" and a qualitative assessment of its "power as the ability to change beliefs and attitudes of others" would make much sense in balance of power considerations today. An actor's hard power should, thus, be accompanied by its soft power in distribution of power analyses. True, the latter is inherently difficult to measure. Yet sticking with merely how many ground soldiers, airplanes, and warships an actor has or what its GDP per capita is by no means healthier. For another thing, that an actor has immense military power does not determine balance of power dynamics on its own. Imagine that a country with remarkable military capabilities (state A) feels insecure by the rising power of another state (state B). It decides on enhancing its military alliances (hard balancing) and pursuing aggressive diplomatic and economic policies vis-à-vis state B (soft balancing). But, in time, state A's resentment reaches to a point that it decides on declaring war on state B; confident that its military power will help it prevail. In this scenario, a very likely possibility is that state A will fail as long as its military power is not supported by (1) other scopes of power discussed above (e.g. economic, diplomatic, cultural etc), and (2) other dimensions of power (e.g. cost of the operation, its weight etc.). State A's balancing attempts would, then, eventually backfire with a worse distribution of power on its side.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Complicating the issue further, this second point as to why balance of power theorists should not limit themselves by taking only military power into account is about the "fungibility" of power as well. Simply put, "fungibility" refers to the ease with which power resources useful in one issue-area can be used in other issue-areas" (Baldwin, 2002: 180). For instance, a power resource in an issue area (e.g. economics) such as national wealth may be fungible or not depending on its practical use in other areas (e.g. military, diplomacy etc). Getting back to the question of military power, it is highly dubious whether its traditional resources (military force in the form of a standing army) is fungible enough to

Secondly, and as a natural corollary to the first argument, leaving some actors out of balance of power dynamics because they lack supposedly prerequisite power resources, that is to say because they lack the power and capabilities to balance against major powers, does not seem plausible at all. The example of Al Qaeda as a well-developed VNSA is a perfect epitome. Despite its limited scope of power compared to the United States (in military, economic etc. terms), other dimensions of its power elevate it to the status of a non-state entity capable of balancing. Domain is one example. Is there any other actor in the last decade that exercised its influence to almost all Western European countries plus the United States and thus to a variety of regions to the extent that Al Qaeda has? Second, look at the weight of Al Qaeda's power. Was it Russia or China or the European Union that dramatically influenced the United States' security paradigms and policies in recent years? Or was it Al Qaeda, an NSA? Cost of power is the third dimension. In making this change possible, how much did Al Qaeda spend? Is it possible to even compare how much Al Qaeda's war on the United States and the United States' war on terror cost? Equally important, is there any state on the earth which can organize a September 11-like attack at such a low cost and expect to survive in the aftermath? The final dimension, means of power is likewise mind provoking. Who could expect that an underrated NSA like Al Qaeda could use not only military but also a number of means (including economic and symbolic) means in harmony in its challenge? All these questions will be dealt with in length in the following chapters. Yet it can be noted here that certain parts of power dimensions can make up for others. That NSAs, nourishing a

---

triumph in contemporary conflicts (Baldwin, 2002: 187), let alone its fungibility in other issue-areas. A particular military force can be highly effective in traditional interstate wars, yet it may prove to be inadequate in fighting other types of conflicts such as guerilla or nuclear warfare (Baldwin, 2002: 187).

combination of these dimensions, represent a different type of power in the end does not mean that they do not have influential power.

There are even more assertive authors arguing that the traditional balance of power has been losing its potential as a framework to understand international politics. Charles Maier (2007: 60-65), for example, argues that the “sites of power” that can partly account for conflicts in the world have changed in recent years. The balance of power reckons with power sites that are filled with military or economic assets. However, another type of power, which he calls “dark power”, is more likely to explain potential flashpoints today. For Maier, dark power exists in familial, spiritual, and economic spheres. At present, many people are under direct influence of power that is exerted in these spheres, respectively by parents and relatives, religious groups and institutions, and the wave of capitalism and globalization. It is the discontent of people in these spheres that is likely to spawn violent movements in the foreseeable future. Thus, new issues such as migration, fundamentalist movements, and agitations against the growing economic inequalities will render the balance of power increasingly irrelevant.

Levy (2004: 37-46) offers other insightful observations. He argues that the theory has a number of biases and thereby it is not correct to consider it having universal applicability. First, there is a great-power bias in most of the works in the theory. It is accepted that balancing contests and the outcomes of these, balances of power, take place among merely great powers. Weak powers do not have much to say about balance of power politics on account of their vulnerability and inadequate capabilities. Second, there is also a Euro-centric bias in the theory. The field on which

balance of power game is played is usually taken granted as the European continent. For Levy, this bias comes as no surprise when it is kept in mind that a large amount of the literature is written by Europeans and Americans. Third, there is an emphasis on land-based military power. It is assumed that land-based military powers, such as those of Louis XIV, Napoleon, or Hitler usually pose greater threat than other powers. Therefore, their rise generates opposing forces that balance against these land-based military powers. For Levy, because of these considerations, it should be kept in mind that the theory has a limited scope and thus should not be regarded universal.

Finally, the analysis of Louise Richardson (2007: 66-69) draws attention to both players and tools of balance of power politics. As regards the former, Richardson argues that balance of power theory's bottom line is in doubt at present. Whereas the theory is based on the idea that states are the primary units in the international system – and thus in balance of power politics –, in reality the importance of non-state groups challenge this basic premise. For Richardson, although the purpose of terrorist groups is not balancing against the United States at present, they have nevertheless turned out to be the major threat for Washington. This brings about the second component of his analysis, tools of balancing: these terrorist groups threaten the whole world for they have taken advantage of recent technological developments in their tactics. For these reasons, Richardson argues that the balance of power seems an anachronistic framework of analysis in today's world.

## **2.6. Why Should Non-State Actors Be Incorporated Into Balance of Power Theory?**

Throughout this chapter, I tried to show how balance of power theorists leave NSAs out of the theory. Given the role of NSAs in contemporary politics, and particularly their aptness to engage in balancing behavior, I argued that this exclusion constitutes a significant gap in balance of power theory. The aim of this chapter was, in short, to demonstrate the need of incorporating NSAs into balance of power theory.

Thus, the crux of the matter in this chapter was to give an adequate answer to the question of why NSAs should be incorporated to the theory. Within relevant sections, I offered a number of reasons for this need. In this part, and as a conclusion for this chapter, I will recapitulate my main suggestions as to why NSAs should be a part of balance of power theory. In doing so, I will look at three factors: motivation of the balancer, capabilities of the balancer, and the impact of balancing behavior. The reason for this categorization is twofold. On the one hand, balance of power theorists frequently refer to the first two factors in arguing that the balance of power is merely about states (and mostly great powers). NSAs are believed to be lacking either motivation or necessary capabilities to balance against states. I suggest, on the contrary that, they have both the motivation and capabilities to balance against great power; partially similar to those of states but mostly unique to NSAs. On the other hand, these theorists underestimate the impact of NSA balancing for the classic, state-centric balance of power dynamics. Therefore, I try to show how NSA balancing leads to profound changes in the state-centric balance of power dynamics. Reiterating my arguments under these headings would, in short, clarify better why NSA

balancing is embedded to state-centric balancing while it has unique characteristics at the same time.

### **2.6.1. Motivation of Potential Balancers**

In balance of power theory, states decide on balancing either in response to the increasing power of a rival state or because they are threatened by not only increasing power but also offensive capabilities, intentions and proximity of a rival. Whichever is the case, the basic motivation of states in balancing against another is believed to be the maximization of their security and thus survival.

Yet, because it appears that the term “survival” speaks for itself, what it really denotes for states is usually overlooked. It is crucial to keep in mind that, states can survive as long as their citizens within their territorial frontiers are secure. Although it sometimes appears that states identify their survival with protecting their territories, what matters most indeed is the constituency on these territories. Territories without people, in other words, can hardly ensure a state’s survival.

The exclusion of NSAs from balance of power dynamics on motivational factors seems far from plausible then. True, NSAs do not possess a state with fixed territorial frontiers. Yet is a piece of land requisite for an actor’s survival? Today many NSAs identify their survival with certain group of people based on their identities (e.g. religious, ethnic, or racial) and a set of beliefs, ideas and practices (e.g. a religion, an ideology, and cultural norms and values). More clearly, they believe that their physical existence/survival makes sense as far as a certain group of people (e.g. all Muslims in the world), a certain system of faith (e.g. Islam), and a certain

way of life (e.g. Islamic way of life/ Islamic culture) are secure. The increasing power and offensive intentions of a state can threaten these notions to such an extent that NSAs may feel no option but to balance; since it might be these notions that are the life blood of NSAs.

Seen this way, it is possible to argue that NSA balancing motivation bears a resemblance to that of state balancing then. Security of individuals may be at the core in both of them. Yet, despite this resemblance, what is unique in NSA balancing is the *detrterritorial nature of security maximization sources* (see Table 1 below). For one thing, NSA balancing involves a *detrterritorial constituency* characterization. Unlike states which engage in balancing to protect the security and well-being citizens within certain national boundaries (in order to ensure survival), NSAs may engage in balancing to secure certain communities wherever they are and whichever state they are formally attached to. In other words NSA balancing may transcend territorial boundaries since the constituency, which NSA identifies itself with, may be dispersed over different nations and territories. For another thing, NSAs balancing may aim at securing a number of *ideational themes* which are most of the time transnational in nature such as religion or ideology. In a nutshell, *what is threatened* and *what is to be secured* have considerably altered in the dynamic nature of contemporary politics. The motivation of balancing remains the same, but the source does hardly so. NSAs may attempt to secure detrterritorial constituencies and ideas that can by no means squeezed into national boundaries. But it is because traditional balance of power

theory limits itself to the state-centric world that it turns a blind eye to deterritorial sources of security maximization.<sup>12</sup>

**TABLE 1. Security Maximization Sources in NSA Balancing**

Point of Convergence: Security Maximization/Survival		
States	NSAs	
Security of the territory Security of the individual (citizen)	Security of certain group of individuals based on their identities (e.g. racial, ethnic, religious)	} Deterritorial security maximization sources (Deterritorial constituency & Ideational themes)
	Security of a set of beliefs, ideas and practices (e.g. religion, ideology, ways of life, and cultural norms and values )	

Maximizing security is still the primary motivation. Yet, *what is threatened and what is to be secured* has been constantly changing.

The second reason why NSAs may be motivated to balance against a great power stems from both their place in the multi-centric world and their non-state actorness. For a number of reasons, NSAs have less to fear to balance. They are, in other words, less strained to engage in balancing. First, despite their frequent oscillation between the state-centric and multi-centric worlds, NSAs are a part of the latter. This means that NSAs – and especially violent ones – do not have complex

<sup>12</sup> There is another uniqueness of NSA balancing that stems from this deterritorial sources of security maximization. Since NSAs draw on ideational elements which are found not only in a particular state but rather dispersed over a wider sphere, they are more likely to muster a broad and transnational support at the grass-roots level. This point further differentiates NSA balancing from hard or soft balancing and may prove to be an advantage in the success of balancing behavior.



political and economic ties, similar to those between states. When they engage in balancing, therefore, they have less to fear about the political and economic implications of their behavior. For this reason, NSAs are less inclined to hang back from balancing compared to states. Second, if an NSA is largely deterritorial (i.e. it can sustain its organizational and operational functions without a territorial base), it has less to fear from the retaliation of the preponderant power. Decision-makers of states are usually aware that balancing may prove to be extremely costly if their attempts fail and preponderant power gives a ferocious military response. That is why they may decide not to balance despite their concerns if the cost-benefit scale appears to tip against them. NSAs are less strained as far as this matter is concerned as well. If they have no home, the preponderant power is likely to have difficulties regarding where to retaliate. Third, when NSAs engage in balancing to secure some supernatural set of beliefs such as religion, or when they supplement their balancing with these, they are likely to draw on a pool of committed recruits. In other words, NSAs may mobilize their constituency around such ideational motivations which are mostly unquestionable, highly sentimental (a factor that may immensely provoke the rage of NSAs in the case of an existential threat and thus spur them to an immediate response) and thus easier to exploit for balancing purposes.

### **2.6.2. Capabilities of Potential Balancers**

Arguably the most encountered reason as to why NSAs have no place in balance of power theory is that they are simply incapable of balancing against great powers. Put differently, it is argued that NSAs do not have the necessary military and

material capabilities to counterbalance preponderant powers. In response to these claims, I offered two suggestions in this chapter: (1) they are not weak and incapable, and (2) they balance in an asymmetric manner because of their non-state actorness and their place in the multi-centric world. Three points stand out as being more important to reach these conclusions.

First, balance of power theorists consider NSAs as weak and incapable because they view NSAs in statist lenses, belonging to the state-centric world. True, if the military and material capabilities of NSAs and states are juxtaposed in the state-centric world, there appears an obvious difference in favor of the latter. However, the nub of the matter is that NSAs balance against states from the multi-centric world. Thus, they draw on non-statist assets and capabilities of this world. They exploit every advantage of the transnational world to offset their disadvantages in traditional military capabilities. More importantly, balance of power dynamics that result from NSA balancing take place in both worlds, rather than merely in the state-centric world. Not only NSAs that flourish within the multi-centric world penetrates into the state-centric one but also states, while responding to the balancing act of NSAs, move constantly between the state-centric and multi-centric worlds. Practical implication of this fact is that military and material capabilities of states in the state-centric world may have limited, if not no, use in the multi-centric world. Awareness of this factor inclines NSAs towards pulling states into their world and waging an asymmetric warfare against them. The aim, of course, is getting states become entangled in a web of problems in a world with which they are not much familiar. In short, NSA balancing is based on a trap which serves to reduce the traditional power gap between

NSAs and states. And as argued previously in this chapter, tragically, preponderant states “have to” fall into this trap since it is almost impossible to eliminate the challenge of NSAs by simply sticking in the state-centric world.

Second, in balance of power theory, power is understood as possession of a number of resources such as “population, territory, wealth, armies, and navies” (Baldwin, 2002: 178). Usually, if not always, power is further narrowed down to “military force conceived in the context of war-winning capability” (Baldwin, 2002: 182). This understanding fails to capture what power denotes in postinternational politics. It is increasingly acknowledged that power is a multidimensional concept. Scope of power, domain of power, weight of power, costs of power and means of power are all different dimensions that have to be reckoned with in power considerations. Since military and economic power is only one of the dimensions of power (scope of power), it would be incorrect to label other actors as weak which may lack in this dimension but excel at others.

Third, putting all these multidimensionality question and non-statist conceptions of power aside, NSAs are very likely to offset their disadvantageous position in traditional military capabilities in the foreseeable future. It is widely reported that some NSAs have made every endeavor to acquire weapons of mass destruction (e.g. nuclear, biological, chemical and radiological weapons). When WMD step in, the (in)capability issue becomes rather irrelevant. The unprecedented damage potential of WMDs can render the gap of traditional military and material assets between states and NSAs only a symbolic one. Surely, these unconventional weapons vary in effect and ease of use. Not all of them may create the impact that

NSAs try to achieve. More important, it is not very easy for NSAs to manufacture these weapons or acquire them by theft and transfer from a state actor. Appreciation of these issues, however, should not sidestep the dynamic and evolving nature of world politics. For one thing, increase in individual skills and creativity lies at the core of the ever-transforming world and thus unavoidable. Today's technical know-how difficulties can, and most probably will be, surpassed by skillful non-state entities in time. For another thing, proliferation of non-state entities day by day (enlargement of the multi-centric world) – coupled with the ever-increasing skills of these actors – create different avenues which are open to clandestine interactions among actors of different kinds. More clearly, acquiring WMDs by outside help may not be as difficult tomorrow as it is today. For instance, a terrorist group determined to have WMD somehow, may cooperate with illegal traffickers (for collecting the material necessary); employ skillful scientists who are supporters or sympathizers to their cause; and may very well combine forces with a revisionist state which has WMD.

In brief, before excluding NSAs from balance of power theory on capability-related grounds, one needs to rethink the following question: Are NSAs really weak?

### **2.6.3. Impact of the Balancing Behavior**

The same as state balancing is shaped within the structure of the state-centric world and in turn has a systemic influence on this system (i.e. balance of power systems sustaining the state-centric world by ensuring the independence and survival of states), NSA balancing contributes to the structure in which it takes place. Since

the state-centric and multi-centric worlds will be explored in detail in the next chapter, I will discuss an important part of the systemic impact of NSA balancing in that chapter. However, I will briefly summarize several of them that were discussed in this chapter without too much concentrating on the theoretical section of the following one.

First, NSA balancing has a triggering effect on balance of power dynamics of the state-centric world. As previously discussed at length, for a number of reasons, NSA balancing against a preponderant power may lead other rival states to initiate their own balancing acts against that power. In addition, NSA balancing may also alter balance of power designs and balancing dynamics of the preponderant state that is challenged. When NSAs decide on balancing against a state, in short, they may become almost an integral part of the state-centric balance of power dynamics.

Second, NSAs – just like other states – can be forced or pushed into balancing activities by being incorporated into state rivalries. States – upon seeing NSAs’ potential to inflict considerable damage on other states – may forge alliances and/or explicit/implicit cooperation with NSAs. It is interesting to note that this practice is by no means new. Even during the Cold War, for instance, states cooperated with terrorist groups against other states. Thus, if there were a major power balancing against the hegemon of the world system today, that balancing power would consider forging a partnership with a major NSA as much as it would consider allying with another major power. Such possibilities further promote the idea that NSAs are getting more and more embedded to state-centric balance of power dynamics.

Third, if NSAs are embedded to balance of power dynamics to this extent, they certainly have a role in highly debated questions like the automatism of balance of power systems, and functions/merits of these systems. For one thing, an NSA in pursuit of a particular distribution of power may engage in balancing and thus have an effect on how particular distributions of power come into existence. For another thing, certain balances of power may incline NSAs to balance against states. This NSA balancing – which aims to achieve a particular distribution of power – and states’ response to this behavior can alter whether balance of power brings war or peace.

In sum, these three points reveal that NSAs are indeed inseparable from state-centric balance of power dynamics. NSA balancing can have a profound impact on balancing policies of states, balances of power as distribution of power, and balance of power systems of the state-centric world.

#### **2.6.4. Extension of Balance of Power Theory: A Necessity**

All in all, this study asserts that, as far as balance of power theory is concerned, stating that NSAs are important players in power relations does not suffice. Neither does it suffice to say that NSAs can inflict considerable damage to great powers. In order that balance of power theory can sustain its explanatory power, NSAs should be considered as capable players actively engaged in balance of power politics. They should be treated as more than an unwelcome guest. Otherwise, balance of power theory will not have a worthy place in the future frameworks of analyses for 21<sup>st</sup> century global politics.

With all these discussions above, I tried to show that NSAs are indeed embedded to balance of power theory and thus states and NSAs should be treated on an almost equal basis with respect to the global distribution of power. Yet how this has become possible is equally important. NSA balancing has become possible because the structure of world politics, in which balance of power politics materialize, has changed drastically in recent decades. This structural change has surely been accompanied by unit-level changes such as the striking increase in the creativity and skills of non-state entities. To date, most if not all balance of power theorists have failed to take notice of these evolving patterns in studying the issue. They have explored the issue through state-centric lenses. Indeed this is partly understandable given that balance of power theory and balancing were formulated within a state-centric world structure. However the sweeping changes for decades resulted in a different world structure which is hardly limited to the traditional state-centric one. I am acutely aware that even the possibility of NSA balancing sounds irksome to some; and no more than an imaginary tale to many others. Yet, it is only through exploring this contextual change that we can see what is taking place right before our eyes. This thesis, therefore, aims to show how NSA balancing is becoming more and more likely in a changing world structure by looking at an important case study that has been taking place in actuality for years.

A final note is crucial before I move on to the following chapter. Those studying the balance of power still within a state-centric paradigm today are actually undercutting the very same theory which they value. The soil on which the seeds of traditional balance of power theory were sown is no longer the same. Failing to notice

this reality hence is no good to the theory itself. The purpose of this thesis, therefore, is not to imply an “end of the history” for balance of power theory. Nor is it to show the irrelevance of it. On the contrary, the rationale behind this study is to realize the full potential of balance of power theory by extending its boundaries to cover the new context and thus opening it up to NSAs.



## CHAPTER III

### NON-STATE ACTORNESS AND BALANCING

*The threshold necessary for small groups to conduct warfare has finally been breached, and we are only starting to feel its effects. Over time, perhaps in as little as twenty years, and as the leverage provided by technology increases, this threshold will finally reach its culmination – with the ability of one man to declare war on the world and win. Now, with every improvement in genetic engineering and nanotechnology (only some of many potential threats), we come closer to the day when a single individual will have the budget, the knowledge, and the tools necessary to make this future possible.*

*John Robb<sup>13</sup>*

The present chapter addresses two major questions. First, if the state-centric paradigm is inadequate in explaining balancing processes today, what kind of an approach is more appropriate in order to understand the context in which balancing of different actors are likely to take place? Second, what are the major yardsticks of influential actorness today that enable NSAs to balance against states irrespective of their power status? I believe that this twofold approach to the question at hand has an important merit. It is a comprehensive step before proceeding to analyze the case study of this thesis; Al Qaeda's balancing against the United States of America. It is comprehensive in the sense that both systemic and unit-level features will be explored

---

<sup>13</sup> See Robb (2007: 8).

which, in combination, helps the reader to see the big picture in balance of power and balancing theory.

First, it will be argued that the structure/context of world politics has drastically changed in recent decades. It is no longer possible to talk merely about a state-centric world with actors being the primary actors. Second, it will be demonstrated how – with this changing context – influential actorness in world politics is changing as well (and how it is no longer reserved for states). Next, several characteristics of violent non-state actors which make them the most eligible type of NSAs to engage in balancing will be explored. Subsequent to an examination of how these different context and actorness contribute to unique characteristics of NSA balancing, I will conclude by a closer look on what impact NSA balancing creates for the changing world structure.

### **3.1. Changing Context**

#### **3.1.1. From International to Postinternational Politics**

World politics has been in a constant and swift change for decades. Unleashed by a variety of factors, these changes of the recent globalization wave have altered almost everything in world politics. States and their state system have been no exception in this process.

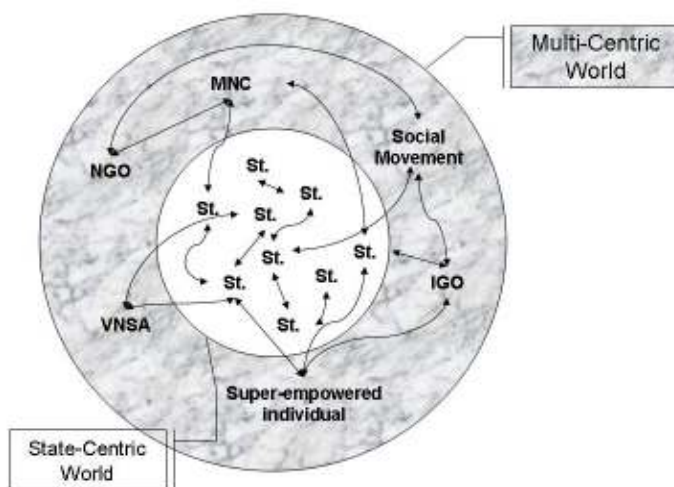
James Rosenau's much debated work on postinternational politics and particularly his portrayal of two different worlds in world politics can be a useful prelude to understand the context in which NSA balancing takes place. In his well-

known book *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity*, Rosenau (1990: 5-6) argued that the changes that had been taking place were so profound that they necessitated new paradigms to understand the functioning of world politics. For him, why these changes differed from their historical precedents and thus required such a drastic shift in political theory was that they almost eradicated the boundaries, or what he calls “parameters”, of world politics (Rosenau, 1990: 9-10). At the micro level, we were witnessing an unprecedented increase in individuals’ skills and power and thus in their ability to shape world politics. At the macro/structural parameter, a multi-centric world – which included various NSAs – had emerged alongside the state-centric one. Finally at the parameter located at intersection of micro and macro and addressing relations between actors in these two levels, what Rosenau calls the “relational parameter”, the concept of authority had turned out to be much more problematic. In other words, a number of actors, and not only states, were competing to acquire authority (Rosenau, 1990: 10-11). With the multifaceted and dynamic character of these changes, in short, many “anomalies” had begun in the then-existing parameters/boundaries. What was overlooked, however, was that these anomalies turned out to be “more pervasive than the recurrent patterns” (Rosenau, 1990: 5). This brief outline above reflected the need for a new term and paradigm for understanding today’s world. With all these changes at hand, it would be mistaken to use the term “international” in understanding world politics.

The very notion of “international relations” seems obsolete in the face of an apparent trend in which more and more of the interactions that sustain world politics unfold without the direct involvement of nations or states. So a new term is needed, one that denotes the presence of new structures and processes while at the same time allowing for still further structural development. A suitable label would be postinternational politics (Rosenau, 1990: 6).

### 3.1.2. Emergence of Two Worlds

As argued above, an important dimension of postinternational politics is the existence of a multi-centric world together with a state-centric world. These two worlds are dominated by different type of actors which Rosenau calls “sovereignty-bound” and “sovereignty-free” actors.<sup>14</sup> While the former denotes states which have sovereignty-related responsibilities and tasks, the latter includes “multinational corporations, ethnic groups, bureaucratic agencies, political parties, subnational governments, transnational societies, international organizations, and a host of other types of collectivities” (Rosenau, 1990: 36). The state-centric world is dominated by sovereignty-bound actors and relations among them whereas the multi-centric world is characterized by a variety of sovereignty-free actors whose influence emanates from ““their authority to initiate and sustain actions,” rather than by their legal status, capabilities, or sovereignty” (Rosenau, 1990: 253) (see Figure 1).



**FIGURE 1. Dual World Structure**

<sup>14</sup> Rosenau (1990: 36) avoids the use of the term “non-state actor” in order not to give an impression that these actors are subordinate to states in world politics. In its place, he invokes the term “sovereignty-free” actor in his studies.

For Rosenau (1990: 246-247) these two worlds coexist. That is, the emergence of a multi-centric world did not herald the end of the traditional state-centric world. Although the capacities and the domain of authority of states have markedly declined, this decline should not be overestimated to argue that states should merely be regarded as players in the multi-centric world. Rather, states preserve a good number of their capabilities and the state-centric international system exists with its own rules and procedures.<sup>15</sup> Multi-centric and state-centric worlds have different types of actors with varying goals, agendas, interaction patterns and so forth (Rosenau, 1990: 249-250). Therefore, they proved to be independent systems

---

<sup>15</sup> There is hardly unanimity on this issue among different postinternationalists. For instance, Ferguson and Mansbach (2007: 535-536) doubt the existence of a separate state-centric world today. For them, interstate relations have been widely penetrated by other actors to the extent that states are almost “captured” by subnational and transnational groups. Furthermore, in clarifying the need of not overvaluing the weight of states in world politics, Ferguson and Mansbach (2007: 537) contend that “the most prominent political units throughout human history, apart from villages and cities, have not been states but empires.” All in all, they differ from Rosenau about the coexistence of two worlds: “The post-international view is that – although sovereign states and their ‘international’ relations obviously remain important and are likely so to remain – the *state-centric world* accepted as a given by traditional theories never fully existed, certainly does not exist now, and will never exist” (Ferguson & Mansbach, 2007: 537).

To clarify my position in this thesis, I should note that I utilize Rosenau’s dualistic structure of world politics. It is true that states were never the only players in world politics in any epoch of the history. More specifically, and contrary to the conventional wisdom, even the legitimate use of force was not completely monopolized by states for ages. Mercantile companies and pirates are only two examples from earlier centuries that reveal the multiplicity of actors as regards the use of force (the former being an example of the legitimate use of force, and the latter being an actor deploying illegitimate use of force) (Devetak, 2005: 237-238). It is equally true that the dynamic and ever-increasing interaction between the actors of the state-centric and multi-centric worlds seems to blur the boundaries of these two; at times giving the impression that they are being merged into an all-encompassing structure. However, the crux of the matter is that the actors, nature of those actors, rules and procedures that bind these actors and so forth are diffuse to such an extent that it is hardly practical to analyze them in one broad structure. Rather, there seems to be two different sets of recurrent and internally consistent patterns that characterize two different worlds (For a summary of the basic features of the state-centric and multi-centric worlds, see Rosenau, 1990: 250). The second reason for the coexistence of two worlds is that expansion of transnational activities in the multi-centric world and encroachment of sovereignty-free actors upon the state-centric world frequently trigger more and more statist policies by states and in turn solidifies the state-centric world. The response from the international society of states to September 11 attacks exemplify this point. At the domestic level, for example, just as a turtle retreats into its shell in the face of danger, the United States held on to overprotective security measures. At the international level, on the other hand, we witnessed both a good deal of states standing together in alliance against the common terrorism threat and an overly aggressive and nationalistic response from the United States, as President Bush’s immediate remarks and following operations on Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrated.

operating by their own rules and functioning.<sup>16</sup> This reality, in line with the general argument of this thesis, has given the actors of the multi-centric world an opportunity to “ignore or evade the demands of the state system” (Rosenau, 1990: 249). In other words, the neorealist claim neatly expressed by Waltz that states determine the environment in which NSAs operate seems to be ill-founded (Rosenau, 1990: 251). Last but not least, these two worlds are by no means mutually exclusive and closed structures. Quite the opposite, there is a considerable degree of interaction between the actors of the state-centric and multi-centric worlds in that both states and NSAs constantly oscillate between these two spheres (Rosenau: 1990: 271-272).<sup>17</sup>

### **3.1.3. Factors Characterizing Posinternational Politics and the Dual World Structure**

The emergence of a dual world structure does not *per se* portray the context in which NSA balancing becomes possible. For this, we need to take several other factors into consideration.

#### **3.1.3.1. Proliferation of Non-State Actors (and Increasing Importance of the Individual)**

Recent decades have witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of actors, most of which have the potential to influence the course of world politics profoundly. As of 2005, there were approximately 200 states; 64,000 transnational companies

---

<sup>16</sup> For an example showing how various actors in global markets have gained an almost self-determining power, see Mathews (1997: 56-57).

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, actors of the multi-centric world learned where to play by the rules of the state-centric system and where to stretch them (Rosenau, 1990: 272).

(TNCs) and their over 866,000 foreign affiliates; 9000 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that belonged to and mainly operated in a single state but surely had international linkages; 240 intergovernmental organizations (IGOs); and 6600 international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) (Willetts, 2005: 426-427). Besides these exist hundreds of violent non-state actors such as terrorist groups, warlords, and transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) as well as civil society movements, some of which have an institutional identity and some of which arise only informally and irregularly reacting to certain developments in national/global politics. Considering that proliferation of these actors is accompanied by new economic, political and social issues, it is increasingly getting harder to claim that states occupy a central role in all aspects of world politics.

How these actors have strengthened in recent years and to what extent they can shape global politics will be analyzed in the latter part of this chapter. For now, it would be of use to underline the common feature of the impact of these actors; the power and capabilities of the individual in our era. By means of different opportunities, individuals have gained enlarged analytic skills in recent years (Rosenau, 1990). Using these skills through a variety of channels (e.g. managing a giant TNC, heading a ferocious terrorist organization, mobilizing people around an environmental cause and so forth), the power of individuals lie at the core of a different world politics today; a world where many actors from both the state-centric and multi-centric worlds challenge the central role played by states in global politics. In other words, “the ability of individuals at the micro level to interact with and within their macro collectivities can make a difference in how issues climb onto and

get resolved on the global agenda” (Koehn and Rosenau, 2002: 106; see also Rosenau, 1990: 285-286).

With these enlarged analytic skills come a corresponding increase in individuals’ expectations and demands from actors that are somehow accountable to them (Mansbach, 2000: 13). When their demands are not met, a probable result is loyalty swings among different actors, which in turn complicates the way world politics unfold.

### **3.1.3.2. Proliferation of New Issues (and Increasing Inadequacy of States in Confronting Them)**

That states are heavily outnumbered by NSAs may not make sense *per se*. The crux of the matter indeed is that the influence of states is increasingly questioned today for their inability of dealing with a range of issues that are spurred by the dynamics of globalization. A large number of NSAs have either replaced or sidelined states in confronting these issues. Transnational crime and terrorism, human trafficking, market instabilities, intra-national conflicts, and the spread of some deadly diseases are some of the concerns that seem impossible to be tackled without the involvement of non-state entities (Fukuda-Parr, 2003: 172-178; see also Mathews, 1997). Not all of these are newborn problems. Yet the nature of almost all of them has altered noticeably in recent decades.

These new threats and actors necessitated a shift from government to governance; denoting a change from a state-centric understanding of policy resolutions to a multi-centric one (Krahmann, 2005: 11-14). In other words, the



incapacity of states to govern effectively in a number of areas led to “a fragmented mode of policy making that includes state and non-state actors at the subnational, national and international levels” (Krahmann, 2005: 11). Therefore, “in return for more effective public policy and meeting their citizens’ demands, whether in relation to stopping the illegal drugs trade or creating employment, the state’s capacity for self-governance – that is, state autonomy – is comprised” (McGrew, 2000: 163).

### **3.1.3.3. Different Centers of Authority in the Political Space**

To summarize the factors discussed so far; on the one hand there are many influential non-state entities today, on the other hand there are a number of issues which states are incapable to address by themselves. Lying at the intersection of these and in a way completing the puzzle about the roles of states and NSAs in world politics is the question of authority of actors.

One of the building blocks of this thesis is the need to dissociate the mechanically constructed link between territory and political authority. In International Relations Theory it is usually taken for granted that actors possessing a certain territory enjoy authority over other actors within its boundaries. However, territory is only one element through which actors can gain authority in the political space. More clearly, political space is an area in which various groupings (e.g. territorial states, racial factions, gender-specific groups, class-based movements) interact and be a magnet for the loyalties of individuals (Mansbach, 2002: 103-104; Biswas, 2002: 197).

The multiplicity of identities of an individual is the second aspect of the issue at hand. Individuals have several identities which come to the fore in different circumstances (Ferguson and Mansbach, 2007: 540; Cerny, 2005: 26-28). Consider the example of a poor woman whose identification might change in different contexts. If and when the gap between the rich and the poor widens in her society and economic hardships that she is faced with turns out to be unbearable, she is more likely to identify herself as “poor” rather than a “woman.” Yet if gender-based discrimination within the society has a deeper impact on her life, she is more likely to underline the differences between men and women rather than her impoverishment. Two crucial points should be noted as a follow-up. First, multiple identities of individuals usually coexist. They do not, for example, cease to exist but are rather submerged and thus can be surfaced at another time (Ferguson and Mansbach, 2007: 541; Mansbach, 2002: 107). In the example above, although the woman’s poverty and disadvantaged position vis-à-vis men are always out there, she may choose to stress one of them depending on circumstances. Second, and perhaps more importantly, by providing what the individual needs for his/her identity at a certain time, an actor might gain the loyalty of the individual (Ferguson and Mansbach, 2007: 540). Again if we get back to our example, the poor woman might affiliate herself with her state, a poverty relief NGO, or even a terrorist organization; depending on which actor really serves for her sense of identity. That is to say, nation-states with fixed territories and boundaries are by no means the only actors to which individuals are loyal and devoted (Rosenau, 2003: 295, see also 306; Ferguson and Mansbach, 2007: 540-541; Cerny, 2005: 26-27).<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Rosenau introduced the term “spheres of authority” to underline the complex authority relationships

#### **3.1.3.4. Declining Importance of Territory and National Boundaries (and Expansion of Transnational Activities and Movements)**

That territories and boundaries have relatively lost their centrality in exercising political muscle in world politics can be observed in other considerations as well. For many centuries, acquiring territory was an important part of the international system since it was believed that more territory would amount to more national power and influence. Therefore, interstate relations were typically characterized by wars over territories (Rosecrance, 1999: 4-6). However, in the postindustrial era territories and large armies to protect national boundaries are only one, and usually not the most fundamental one, of the determinants of national power. Capital, technological advancement, innovative governance structures are some other factors in acquiring political leverage in global affairs today. The interesting point to note here is that possession and effective usage of these factors are by no means confined to states. Many NSAs of the multi-centric world have fittingly epitomized how these factors can be deployed by non-territorial entities and served to increase their prestige and weight in world politics.

The second aspect of the issue at hand, and which is closely related to the points made earlier in this chapter, is that territorial boundaries have frequently been

---

of the multi-centric world. For Rosenau (1997: 39), “the world is not so much a system dominated by states and national governments as a congeries of spheres of authority (SOAs) that are subject to considerable flux and not necessarily coterminous with the division of the territorial space.” Rosenau (2003: 295) asserts that “the boundaries of the bargaining agents, the SOAs, are defined by those entities to which people accord salience and thereby attach their loyalties. Thus an SOA can be an issue regime, a professional society, an epistemic community, a neighborhood, a network of the like-minded, a truth commission, a corporation, business subscribers to codes of conduct (e.g., the Sullivan principles), a social movement, a local or provincial government, a diaspora, a regional association, a loose confederation of NGOs, a transnational advocacy group, a paramilitary force, a credit-rating agency, a strategic partnership, a transnational network, a terrorist organization, and so on across all the diverse collectivities that have become sources of decisional authority in the ever more complex multi-centric world.”

transcended by a multiplicity of actors from both the state-centric and multi-centric worlds. Within the dynamic structure of postinternational politics, a variety of actors perform transnational functions on a wide range of issues and states frequently have great difficulty in controlling the pace and intensity of these functions. This reality once again points to the need to recognize that, although still significant, territorial boundaries do not frame the outer edges of the political space (McGrew, 2000: 162-163). They are rather only a part of the political space where “the boundaries of cultures, markets, ethnicities, and religions generally cut across and often stretch beyond state boundaries” (Mansbach, 2002: 106).

#### **3.1.3.5. Information and Communications Innovation**

Revolutionary improvements in information and communications technology are one of the most significant features characterizing postinternational politics. On the one hand, there are unprecedented innovations in computer, media, and satellite technologies in recent decades; contributing largely to the empowerment of those micro and macro actors that can use them effectively. On the other hand, these innovations are coupled with declining costs of many information and communications technologies (Rosenau, 2003: 263-264). These two trends constitute another block of the postinternational building where states and NSAs vie with each other for more influence in world politics; but “on a more and more equal basis.”

The most powerful engine of change in the relative decline of states and the rise of nonstate actors is the computer and telecommunications revolution, whose deep political and social consequences have been almost completely ignored. Widely accessible and affordable technology has broken governments’ monopoly on the collection and management of large amounts of information and deprived governments of the deference they enjoyed

because of it. In every sphere of activity, instantaneous access to information and the ability to put it to use multiplies the number of players who matter and reduces the number who command great authority (Mathews, 1997: 51).

The difficulties that states encounter in this process are manifold. Arguably the most obvious one is that the technological improvements have enabled people, ideas, capital and a variety of resources to be dispersed all over the world; both easier and faster. Thus states find themselves more and more inadequate in controlling the endless trans-boundary flows (Willetts, 2005: 438). Last but not least, technological revolutions have also a part in the competition between actors of the two worlds for more authority and loyalty of individuals. As ideas and people disseminating those ideas spread all over the globe, seemingly unrelated groups of individuals may converge on the same causes by means of the Internet, satellite networks, and so forth (Florini, 2005: 24).

#### **3.1.3.6. The Rise of Network Systems**

Within this dynamic and complex developments and patterns of interaction, network systems have gained a wide prevalence alongside the traditional and often unwieldy hierarchical organizations of governments. Not only individuals but also many actors of both the state-centric and multi-centric worlds came to the conclusion that it might be network systems that are better-equipped - or at least the fast-track route – to survive, flourish and have an impact in postinternational politics.<sup>19</sup> The reasons are manifold but two of them stand out as being more central. First, networks are usually nonhierarchical in nature (or at least have a looser understanding of

---

<sup>19</sup> Employment of network systems can be increasingly observed not only in NSAs but also in governmental structures. For an insightful analysis of how government networks already play a role in world politics and can lead to a different world order in the future; see Slaughter (2005).

hierarchy) and thus involve more informal interactions among its parts. This in turn brings about the advantage of flexibility, innovation and resilience (Krahmann, 2005: 14-15). In other words, since the linchpin of the network system is not the presence of a leader and top-to-bottom decision making structure but rather “multiple nodes where collections of individuals or groups interact for different purposes” (Mathews, 1997: 52), they can more easily and rapidly acclimatize to the contextual developments. Lack of bureaucratic restrictions brings about not only in-group creativeness but also a relative freedom from time-consuming processes. Second, although both formal hierarchical and informal network systems have taken advantage of information and communication technologies, it appears that scales are tipped in favor of the latter as far as the input of such technologies for the development of these modes of organization is concerned. As already mentioned, governments’ monopoly on information came to an end with the spread of technological advances. Considering that networks depend on creativity and vision of empowered individuals more than hierarchical structures do, and allow a larger freedom of action for individuals to deploy new technologies; it seems fair to claim that these technological skills are likely to contribute more to NSAs in the competition for leverage in world politics (Mathews, 1997: 66; Florini, 2005: 24).

### **3.1.3.7. Conclusion: A Heterogeneous World Politics**

To conclude, the aim in the first part of this chapter was to explore the space in which NSA balancing can take place. All of the factors discussed above should not be interpreted as the harbinger of a world where states and territorial boundaries will

not exist. On the contrary, they will remain important components of the political space for a variety of reasons that fall beyond the scope of this study. What is more, many states are taking ambitious steps in order to adapt to political, economic and social trends in world politics. Yet, it is essential to observe the dualistic structure of world politics today: a world where the state-centric and multi-centric worlds coexist; where individuals, a number of NSAs, and intergovernmental entities (be it subnational or supranational) move constantly between these two worlds; where this multiplicity of actors is increasingly empowered and thus challenges the authority and autonomy of nation-states; and where interactions between these actors are taking place on a more and more equal basis than in the earlier state-centric nature of world politics. It is only through the dualistic nature of postinternational politics that we can understand how a violent NSA (Al Qaeda) grows in the multi-centric world and yet challenges the supremacy of a state (the United States) through its sporadic penetrations into the state-centric world.

### **3.2. Changing Actorness in a Changing Context**

In the second part of the chapter, I will address the question of what it takes to be an influential actor in a changing world structure. If there are drastic changes in the context of world politics, it is inevitable that actorness within this structure is in a metamorphosis as well. This is most evident by the increasing power and influence of NSAs that was discussed earlier. Simply put, having a legal status like states have is not adequate for being an influential actor in postinternational politics. NSAs, lacking

a legal status similar to states have, are proving their influence by showing some other characteristics.

### **3.2.1. Influential Actorness in Postinternational Politics<sup>20</sup>**

Given that the multi-centric world has enlarged vastly in recent decades and that NSAs possess as much leverage as states do in world politics, then a reasonable question would be: What distinctive characteristics, as a result of which NSAs have proven to acquire such an influence, does actorness include in the postinternational framework of analysis? This is a valid question because what it takes to be an influential actor has altered alongside the context of world politics.

Indeed the definition of NSA seems to speak for itself. NSAs may simply be defined as actors other than states. However, such a holistic definition may prove to be problematic in practice, if not in theory. For the purposes of this study, it is essential to differentiate entities that can be labeled as NSAs owing to their potential to become influential players in world politics from entities that can be labeled as NSAs for merely their presence as actors other than states. Therefore, the term is employed in a broader sense in this study, denoting actors other than states which have *willingness* and some sort of *capability to influence course of events* on local or global issues with some measure of *regularity*. More precisely, it appears four decisive factors characterize influential actorness in postinternational politics:

---

<sup>20</sup> Before proceeding, I should note that the present discussion of influential actorness in postinternational politics will be a preliminary one and complemented with the following section of this chapter. Therefore, I will only briefly touch upon certain issues here, but readers will be able to find an elaborate analysis of them in the fourth section of this chapter where I will show why VNSAs as influential actors are the most eligible actors for balancing in postinternational politics.



willingness, capability, impact, and sustainability/endurance. A fifth can be included to this list which is indeed an outcome of the first four: recognition from other actors.

Firstly, willingness implies a firm motivation and determination of actors. Today many NSAs are willing to make a change despite difficulties that they encounter in the state-centric world.

Secondly, capability is a multifaceted factor. Arguably what matters most in terms of capabilities of actors is, in a clichéd maxim, to win the hearts and minds of a *constituency*. Acquiring the loyalty of a constituency is an outlet for NSAs to “have authority to initiate and sustain actions that may have repercussions beyond the boundaries of countries” (Rosenau, 1990: 41).<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, not only “good guys” (e.g. environmental or human rights NGOs) but also “bad guys” (e.g. terrorist organizations) are trying to take advantage of this outlet. In the final analysis, however, whichever actor acquires the loyalty of individuals, its chances for influential actorness increase.<sup>22</sup> How actors do so brings us to the second dimension of the capability question. NSAs are *employing services and tasks that are historically monopolized by states*. Two prominent of them are the legitimate use of force/violence and provision of welfare services. For instance, many terrorist organizations today claim that, through the use of force, they are defending the basic

---

<sup>21</sup> Acquiring the loyalty of a constituency is one of the foremost criterions of gaining actorness in the postinternational framework of analysis. Therefore, it can be considered as a separate decisive factor. Yet, I interpret it as a capability question because mass support is a keystone for NSAs to create the impact that they desire on a particular issue.

<sup>22</sup> This is also partially why influential non-state actors will flourish in the foreseeable future. If whoever acquires the loyalty of individuals will gain an advantage in influential actorness, and if the number of free, open-minded and skillful individuals (who are less likely to swear their loyalty blindly to states where they are born or reside) is increasing day by day in the postinternational era; then an escalating presence and authority of non-state actorness is inevitable in the future because NSAs will magnetize more and more individuals of this kind. Put differently, it is because we are moving toward an individual-centric paradigm that non-state actorness is gaining – and will gain – momentum.

rights and freedoms of particular constituency (which may indeed be officially represented by a state or a group of states). Believing that it is oppressed and persecuted under its state/states, this constituency can give allegiance to a terrorist group. Similarly, if a humanitarian NGO replaces a state in the provision of basic welfare services to individuals, it may get the loyalty and support of these people, which in turn adds to its influence. Another aspect of the capability question is *taking advantage of information and communication technologies*. Considering the place of technologies such as the Internet, satellite TV, cell phones in our life, it can easily be argued that they have proved to be indispensable for the growth (and balancing capacity) of NSAs. As argued earlier, the successful use of these technologies even made it possible that states and NSAs vie with each other for more influence in world politics on an almost equal basis. Finally, *a shrewd understanding of the operation, rules and patterns of the two worlds* reveals the capability of NSAs and thus adds to their influence. Since the actors of the dual world structure move constantly between the state-centric and multi-centric worlds, they should be familiar with – and easily get accustomed to – both of these worlds. For this, they need mechanisms which would both make these moves possible and help them operate successfully in these worlds. A specific mechanism is employment of the network system as an organizational structure. Through networks, actors in the system get an opportunity to disperse into multiple branches that are less hierarchical, more flexible and more innovative. Put differently, a full fledged network system provides an opportunity of ubiquity. Even the central organ of a particular actor may not be involved in an issue in the state-centric or multi-centric world; its branches may be so. Therefore, the

network mode of organization brings about a reasonable degree of command of the two worlds of postinternational politics.

Thirdly, impact denotes changes in course of events on particular issues, which materialize as the tangible outcome of this formidable combination of willingness and capability. Though appearing a weighty phrase, it does not imply revolutionary changes that end some eras and bring about new ones. Rather it means an entity's profound impact on certain issues in world politics; to the extent that this impact breaks the monopoly of other actors on these issues and thus the presence of that entity can no longer be neglected by other actors in political, economic, social, and cultural spheres of world politics.

Fourthly, an actor pursuing influence should be able to sustain its operational robustness and manage to survive in adverse conditions. Its activeness should not be based on a one-time success. For these, it again appears that NSAs should have a number of mechanisms. For one thing, throughout their development, they should build up organizational capabilities and arrangements that would make them resistant to a complete dissolution in the face of severe crises. For another thing, actors should and do *learn*. Actors may learn from their own experiences and from what goes on around them. No matter what the source is, learning has an existential value for the evolution of non-state actors. Actors that ignore or resist acting in response to what they learn and rather choose to stand still in turbulent world politics are not likely to survive (Rosenau, 1990: 137-138; Thomas et al., 2005: 107). Only when actors use their capacity to learn that they are able to adapt to their environment; and only when

they use different adaptive strategies effectively that they can shift constantly between the state-centric and multi-centric worlds (Rosenau, 1990: 272).

Fifthly, recognition is also a part of non-state actorness. In effect, acquiring non-state actorness can be conceived along a line where NSAs with some sort of capabilities and willingness take action with concrete purposes, change course of events on their targeted issues, do not fizzle out in adverse conditions and sustain their operability and get recognition by other actors in the environment where they operate. Put differently, NSAs which undergo these four phases are most likely to get recognition from others as influential players in world politics.

### **3.2.2. Categorization of Non-State Actors**

To date, a good number of entities have been labeled and categorized as different types of NSAs.<sup>23</sup> For the purposes of this study, it is possible to classify them in six broad groupings. First, there are Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) which may be defined as “any group of people relating to each other regularly in some formal manner and engaging in collective action, provided that the activities are non-commercial and non-violent, and are not on behalf of a government” (Willetts, 2005: 435). The term INGO is used to differentiate International NGOs that are not country-specific but rather operate across boundaries. NGOs perform numerous functions on a wide range of issues; including – but not limited to – human rights, poverty relief, post-conflict development, arms transfers,

---

<sup>23</sup> For some categorizations, see Krahmann (2005: 8-9); Noortmann, Arts, & Reinalda (2001: 303-304).

environmental degradation and so forth.<sup>24</sup> Second, there are Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) which are founded by states. They vary considerably in the extent of membership (e.g. regional or global) and aims and objectives (e.g. more general or more specific objectives). United Nations (UN), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), World Trade Organization (WTO), European Union (EU), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), African Union (AU) are some of the most well-known examples of IGOs. Third, Multinational/Transnational Corporations (MNCs/TNCs) are business companies whose manufacturing and marketing bodies are located in a number of different countries, at times scattered around the world. General Motors, Sony Corporation, Shell, and Halliburton Energy Services, which have all gained vast leverage in world politics, exemplify this large category. Fourth, there are Violent Non-State Actors (VNSAs) which may be broadly defined as “a non-state organization that uses collective violence” (Thomas, Kiser, & Casebeer, 2005: 9). Terrorist groups, guerillas, warlords, liberation movements, insurgents, and criminal organizations can all be analyzed under this broad category. Fifth, some extremely influential individuals can have an unimaginable impact in certain issues and thus can be considered as NSAs as well. For instance it is questionable whether any organization could raise consciousness about global warming as much as the former vice-president of the United States, Al Gore, has done for years. Finally, there are some social movements consisting of like-minded people united around a cause in

---

<sup>24</sup> With the increasing importance of NGOs, many terms began to be used to portray different types of NGOs. Some of them are Governmentally Organized NGOs (GONGOs), Governmentally Regulated and Initiated NGOs (GRINGOs), Manipulated NGOs (MANGOs), and State-Influenced NGOs (SINGOs) (Hagel & Peretz, 2005: 471-472). Also the term Hybrid INGO is used to indicate organizations which include both governments and NGOs as members (Willetts, 2005: 440; see also Mathews, 1997: 62-63).

mostly an informal manner, but can lead to significant changes about their causes (e.g. anti-globalization, anti-war or ecological movements) (Rosenau, 1990: 125-126). Although they usually do not have an institutional identity and show rather irregular activism, their impact in certain issues are momentous.

### **3.2.3. How Do Non-State Actors Matter in World Politics?**

Earlier in this chapter, the extent of NSAs' strength in world politics was shown several times. It would now be of use to be more specific and cast light on the means from which the power of NSAs emanates.

To begin with, many NSAs have a significant role in diffusion of certain ideas, values, and norms (Noortmann et al., 2001: 301). Whether through words or deeds, not only INGOs and global IGOs that operate transnationally but also certain individual figures play a part in the spread and recognition of certain ideas all over the world. A classic example is the promotion of universal human rights understanding. It would almost be impossible for the notion of human rights to get such a widespread recognition in the absence of efforts of the United Nations, of various human rights INGOs (e.g. Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch) and of some influential individuals (e.g. Martin Luther King, Jr. or well-known rock band U2's Bono). That some NSAs are capable of raising consciousness on some issues, mould and sometimes manipulate public opinion, and thus mobilize a lot of people to react on their consciousness provides them additional strength (Mathews, 1997: 53; McGrew, 2000: 147). Put differently, they can largely shape what goes on at grass-roots level regarding certain issues and thus prove to be vital pressure groups

for governments. Furthermore, through their relentless efforts, NSAs frequently become a part of the decision-making processes of states and other NSAs; and hence compelling them to make changes on their decisions and strategies (Noortmann et al., 2001: 301; McGrew, 2000: 147). This is true for almost all types of NSAs listed above. They can have a remarkable impact on the decisions of others. Indeed it is possible to speak of a complex web of actors in which many states, NGOs, IGOs, TNCs/MNCs, VNSAs, influential individuals, and social movements have to take other relevant actors' demands and interests into consideration while playing on the field of postinternational politics. Finally, two spheres of activity of NSAs are of the utmost importance for understanding the extent to which they proved to be competent competitors for states. On the one hand, many NSAs (and both violent and non-violent ones) replace states as the main provider of the basic needs of citizens such as food, shelter, health and education (Mathews, 1997: 53). This role taken up by NSAs is usually at the request of states (for assisting them) while sometimes it is an effort by NSAs to exploit the vacuum created by the absence of states in providing certain services. Either way, it undermines the authority of states to some extent and may lead to loyalty shifts in some circumstances. On the other hand, many VNSAs defy the monopoly of states on the legitimate use of violence and thus weaken one of the key components of statehood.<sup>25</sup>

The other side of the coin is once again the environment in which NSAs operate. To be clearer, the performance of NSAs are not solely determined by their efforts but rather largely shaped by contextual features (Noortmann et al., 2001: 300;

---

<sup>25</sup> Not only fundamentalist terrorist organizations (Devetak, 2005: 242) but also networks of organized crime resort to violence – either against each other or government authorities – and thus undermine states' monopoly (Williams, 2002: 167).

see also Cerny, 2000). For instance, transnational NSAs' influence can be affected by the nature of the relationship between them and governmental actor as well as the presence/absence of international norms and institutions where NSAs operate (Risse-Kappen, 1995).

It is possible to present many more examples clarifying how NSAs matter in world politics. Nevertheless some aspects discussed above represent in microcosm why NSAs should be reckoned with more seriously in both theoretical and practical considerations. The gist of this short exploration is the need of a mental shift from a state-centric world where states are key players and interstate relations are largely dominant to a dualistic world structure where NSAs and states constantly interact with each other and thus move between the state-centric and multi-centric worlds when necessary.

### **3.3. Changing Balancing as a Pathway of the Interactive Relationship between the Context and the Actor**

As it was implied several times in this chapter, balancing is a pathway of the interactive relationship between the context and actors within that context. On the one hand, balancing behavior of actors is largely shaped by and within their context. For instance, states engage in balancing since they are dissatisfied about a particular distribution of power in their context (state-centric world); and they balance with the tools available in their context, not to mention that their balancing is usually limited by the rules and norms of their context (e.g. they do not resort to illegitimate tactics unlike VNSAs). On the other hand, when actors engage in balancing, this behavior is



likely to contribute to the future shape of their context. For instance, state balancing plays a part in the existence of a balance of power system which in turn ensures the independence of states and thus the state-centric world.

Put this way, if both (1) the context/structure/space of world politics and (2) what it takes to be an influential actor in this new structure has changed; it is inevitable that (3) balancing as a pathway of the interactive relationship between the structure and actors change as well. However, balance of power theorists limit themselves to only state-centric world as the structural context and states as the influential actors. That is why they do not notice that balancing is in a metamorphosis now.

All in all, it would be more appropriate to analyze NSA balancing within the duality context. There is a considerable degree of interaction between the actors of the state-centric and multi-centric worlds. A good deal of this interaction is cooperative and harmonizing. States and NSAs work together on countless issues and thus complement each other. However, there is also a frictional and confrontational dimension of this interaction; and it is this dimension within which NSA balancing takes place. This happens mainly in two ways. First, NSAs may be threatened by specific behaviors of a preponderant state and start balancing against this power. Second, NSAs (both violent and non-violent ones) – by their mere presence and collectivity of efforts – may start changing the dual structure of world politics. For instance, both VNSAs' and some influential individuals' course of action may at times seem to be working against the foundations of the state-centric world. Take the example of Al Qaeda and George Soros (and Open Society Institute established by

Soros). On the one hand, Al Qaeda's ultimate goal is unification of all Muslims in the world under an Islamic Caliphate, which means eradication of present boundaries of a number of nation-states. On the other hand, Soros' market-driven financial and political activities have a deterritorial aspect as well because they envisage that national boundaries should not get in the way of transnational transactions. Combined effects of these different forms of NSA balancing may lead to gradual changes in the dual world structure. With their presence and collectivity of efforts, NSAs may enlarge the boundaries of the multi-centric world and/or weaken the foundations of the state-centric world. This, in turn, may lead to a confrontational encounter with states which want to preserve their own space, the state-centric world.

All in all, it can be argued then that there are two parameters of NSA balancing in postinternational politics. One is the balancing act of an NSA against particular states. This may be called *classic balancing* in the sense that the target of balancing, just like in state balancing, is merely an agent in world politics. The second one may be termed *fundamentalist balancing* since it has the potential of shaping the structure and order of world politics. It should be noted, however, that there are not clear-cut boundaries between these two parameters all the time. A classic NSA balancing may at times take the appearance of fundamentalist balancing. What I address in this study is the former, classic NSA balancing against a preponderant state.

### **3.4. Balancing Capacities of Influential Violent Non-State Actors: Why Are They More Capable and Likely to Balance?**

If we accept that diversity and strength of NSAs carry considerable weight today, and certain features of postinternational world are conducive for NSA balancing, then an important question remains unanswered. Can all NSAs take advantage of the distinct attributes of their non-state actorness and thus attempt to balance against states to the same extent? In this fourth section of this chapter, I shall substantiate my argument that VNSAs are better equipped, more capable, and more eligible than non-violent NSAs for balancing against states.

#### **3.4.1. Violent Non-State Actors as Organic Entities**

The thrust of my stance on the nature of most VNSAs is, as Thomas et al (2005) suggest, that they are organic entities. Indeed, not only VNSAs but a variety of organizations resemble living organisms in the sense that “they grow, adapt, spawn, and in some cases die” (Thomas et al., 2005: 13-14). Yet, there are other characteristics shedding light on this resemblance.

In analyzing the relationship between political agents and their structural context of action, Cerny (2000) once argued that the historical development of agents and their structural contexts are not mutually exclusive and that agents have an interactive relationship with their environments. Their course of action is shaped within the imperatives of their structure, and yet they also have the ability to generate structural changes in time. As Thomas et al. (2005) show, a similar kind of interactive relationship can also be applied to the relationship between VNSAs and their

environment. VNSAs are highly skilled at exploiting contextual gaps (e.g. “failures of governance” or “identity cleavages” among societies) and creating “niches” in which they can survive and develop (Thomas et al., 2005: 53-90). In other words, VNSAs frequently move to the state-centric world and find trouble spots of this world (e.g. weak or failed states) to flourish. This is an example of the impact of structural context on a violent agent. Yet the story goes on in the sense that VNSAs take some “reinforcing actions” to deepen the contextual gaps of their environment. In other words, they try to perpetuate the adverse conditions (e.g. incapacity of a state to address the basic needs of people or illegitimacy of a state in the eyes its citizens) which enable them to survive, grow, and enhance their influence (Thomas et al., 2005: 79-80).

Two other crucial terms that Thomas et al. (2005) employ are “life cycle” and “negative entropy.” Like organisms, organizations such as VNSAs go through different stages (e.g. gestation, growth, maturity and transformation) in their life cycles (Thomas et al., 2005: 93, 96-98). Yet what differentiates VNSAs from organisms is that the former can survive forever in the presence of certain conditions and building negative entropy is *sine qua non* for VNSAs for such endurance (Thomas et al., 2005: 16). Many organisms prepare themselves for the future, in case that they confront unpleasant experiences. The same consideration holds for VNSAs as well:

*Negative entropy* is the “store of fuel,” and the “winter fat” on which the VNSA draws during periods of crisis. It is common and often appropriate to think of cash reserves, abundant recruits, and back-up sanctuaries as the forms of negative entropy relied upon by the VNSA. Through systems analysis, however, other more potent and less appreciated forms emerge, including

culture, socialization, social services, intelligence gathering and command and control structures (Thomas et al., 2005: 16-17).

In brief, negative entropy is arguably the most important way how VNSAs sustain their organization. It minimizes the possibility of a complete dissolution (and thus an end to the balancing behavior) in the face of severe crises.

Furthermore, Thomas et al.'s analyses (2005: 98-114) highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of VNSAs which are usually overlooked. They contend that VNSAs have four sub-systems under which a variety of functions – such as recruitment, socialization, learning, training and so forth – are performed in unison. The utility or adequacy of their categorization can be questioned. However, what matters more for the purposes of this study is that the damage done to a particular sub-system (or call it a set of functions) does not necessarily lead to the collapse of VNSAs. They may continue to exist despite distortions and can resurface later on (Thomas et al., 2005: 114). The complexity and diversity of their functions, in short, add to their endurance and persistence on many occasions.

### **3.4.2. Outsider to the State-Centric World**

As stated before, that NSAs are located outside the state-centric world (despite frequent penetrations) partially accounts for the ability of them to challenge states in many aspects. However, VNSAs benefit more from their location in the dualistic world than other non-violent NSAs and this has a pivotal role why they are more eligible to balance against states.

First, VNSAs do not abide by the rules, norms and practices of the state-centric world. Well established notions of interstate relations such as the principle of

non-intervention, the rule of law, and respect for territorial integrity do not make sense for many VNSAs at all. Therefore, they are highly inclined to bend the rules of this world whenever doing so serves their interests. Other actors in the multi-centric world can also bypass the state-centric procedures and values (Rosenau, 1990: 249). Yet the dividing line here is the degree of interdependence among states and NSAs. This second point is multifaceted. For one thing, states and NSAs collaborate on a long list of issues. They frequently need each other for advancing their interests and goals (for examples, see Rosenau, 1990: 279-282; Hagel & Peretz, 2005). For another thing, many IGOs which operate in both the state-centric and multi-centric worlds serve to plug the gaps of interstate relations. This comes as no surprise considering that they are established by states. As a matter of fact, there is an argument suggesting that – contrary to the conventional wisdom – increasing power of some IGOs such the EU makes states stronger since they become entities through which states settle many problems that they can not handle alone (Biswas, 2002: 189). Last of all, both states and IGOs that they establish may constrain non-violent NSAs' room for maneuver and affect their potential for success at times. For instance, the Economic and Social Council of the UN frames the question of how an NGO should look like in order to be acknowledged as a genuine, legitimate NGO (Willems, 2005: 436-437).<sup>26</sup> In other words, for legitimacy and recognition, most if not all non-violent NSAs are expected to conform to certain norms and rules set by either states or IGOs. However, VNSAs do not have to pay attention to such expectations since they are less dependant on states for their continuance (or likewise recognition or legitimacy) than other NSAs

---

<sup>26</sup> Surely, such formal preferences of states or IGOs do not hamper the proliferation of NGOs of different kinds and their increasing importance in world politics. Yet, they may constrain the autonomy of some NGOs that try to accommodate themselves to the principles of the state-centric world.

are. Putting such principles aside, many transnational NSAs' success depend both on "their ability to adjust to the domestic structure of the "target country"" (Risse-Kappen, 1995: 26) and the presence of international institutions in the environment where transnational actors operate (Risse-Kappen, 1995: 28-32). The presence of IGOs is surely not an essential prerequisite for transnational NSAs to perform their activities; yet it seems a significant facilitator at times. In the words of Risse-Kappen (1995: 32):

...cooperative and highly-institutionalized inter-state relations tend to lower state boundaries thereby allowing for flourishing transnational relations. At the same time, these institutions also legitimize transnational activities in the "target state"; actors are less and less treated as "foreigners," but as almost indistinguishable from other domestic players.

This is why VNSAs have more potential to balance. Since there is no complex interdependence between them and states, VNSAs – unlike many non-violent NSAs – do not have to be "less and less treated as "foreigners"" or "indistinguishable from other domestic players" in order to be legitimate or successful.

It is also important to bear in mind that this complex interdependence – and even a kind of symbiotic relationship at times –, between states and IGOs on the one hand and non-violent NSAs on the other can be more frequently observed in interstate relations. Many great powers are so closely tied to each other that envisaging an interstate balancing seems difficult to imagine. All in all, that VNSAs are placed outside of the state-centric world, that they are largely not dependent on states to function effectively and thus have less to fear about challenging them openly, and that – in these challenges – they are more inclined to disregard the rules and norms of the

state-centric world contributes to the eligibility of VNSAs for balancing against states.

### **3.4.3. Double-Barreled Way of Gaining Grassroots Support and Recognition**

Most VNSAs (particularly terrorist groups) can and do gain recognition from a particular constituency and from other actors in world politics in a number of ways. Two of them are based on a dual utilization of the state-centric system. On the one hand, VNSAs exploit and fill in the vacuums created by states in the state-centric world. On the other hand, they undermine the very system that they take advantage of.

#### **3.4.3.1. The Violent Façade**

It was argued earlier that NSAs achieve fame as they start changing course of events significantly on particular issues. What differentiates VNSAs from non-violent ones here is that the former feeds on violence for spreading their name besides meeting their objectives. Violence is a fast-track route for being recognized as an influential actor in world politics. VNSAs are acutely aware that bloodshed is perhaps the easiest outlet for hitting the headlines. Therefore, coming from the multi-centric world and striking the state-centric one, VNSAs inflict considerable damage to the latter at times. The more they strike, the more recognition they get; recognition in the sense that more and more people, states, and other NSAs become aware of their



potential in global politics.<sup>27</sup> This argument mainly rests on political and socio-psychological factors.

For one thing, the violence unleashed by VNSAs may have profound political implications for states and their state-centric system. VNSAs may upset some of the fundamental assumptions and principles of this system. For instance, their attacks may thwart states' principal goal (according to the conventional wisdom) of maximizing their security. No less appalling is the damage done to the notion of territorial integrity and the argument that states are the main agents of providing security for citizens. Consequently, that states are always out there – vigilant and robust – to protect the lives of their citizens is considerably questioned.

For another thing, VNSAs' brutal attacks create fear and panic in the state-centric world, not only at the societal but also at the governmental level. One implication of this fear is the wide media and press coverage of the violent acts of VNSAs. This surely spreads out their publicity. The other implication seems a bit more dangerous. In the aftermath of VSAs' attacks, many states – in a frenzy of fear and panic – react impulsively and introduce some measures to combat VNSAs that are likely to play into VNSAs' hands. The recent example of the American war on terror perfectly illustrates this point. This issue will be explored thoroughly in the following chapters, yet it would be of use to remind the argument for now that a number of counterterrorism policies of the United States increased sympathy and

---

<sup>27</sup> Two crucial points need to be noted at this point. First, violence is most of the time the only way for some NSAs to attract attention in the state-centric world. Since their presence and impact is largely ignored within the state-centric world, VNSAs use violence to get their concerns involved in this world. Second, it is mostly the “scale” and “targets” of violent acts that determine whether a VNSA gains a “local” or “global” recognition. The crux of the matter here is that it is also easier to get global recognition through violence. A NSA using violent methods effectively and with some sort of regularity is very likely to be reckoned with by a wide range of other actors across the globe.

support (and thus recognition and prestige) for Al Qaeda among different societies. This point brings us to the second aspect of violence; getting the support of a particular constituency.

Actors may be recognized as influential players in world politics by their associates. However, without the constant support of a particular constituency, they are likely to fizzle out in time. As argued previously, today many violent NSAs claim to be protecting the security, basic rights, and freedoms of particular groups of people. Although a community may be officially attached to a nation-state, members of that community may believe that they are underrepresented or else suppressed and victimized by their very states. Then, the violence unleashed by VNSAs makes sense if these organizations can represent their attacks as being carried out not for their own interests but in the name of particular communities. Members of that community begin to identify their security and well-being with the presence and violent activities of a VNSA.

Finally, putting all these support or recognition issues aside, violence makes a huge difference as far as the impact of the balancing behavior is concerned. It is highly questionable whether there is a non-violent technique that can create the same political, economic and psychological impact that violent methods create. By carrying out bombings and attacks, VNSAs inflict considerable damage to both hard power (e.g. casualties and economic costs) and soft power (e.g. prestige) of states. VNSAs are more eligible to balance in this sense too; non-violent efforts of other NSAs are likely to be too “soft” to either contain the power of a preponderant state or make a substantial change in the overall distribution of power.

#### **3.4.3.2. The Non-Violent Façade**

Not only do VNSAs acquire the loyalty and attachment of individuals by undermining the state-centric world but they do so also by exploiting the gaps of this world. States are getting more and more incapable of handling a multiplicity of issues surrounding them. On occasions when states can not perform traditional and expected functions, VNSAs step in. Especially in weak, failed or war-torn states, VNSAs provide a range of social services such as meeting the basic needs of people (e.g. food, clothing, shelter) and financing medical, religious, and educational institutions. Services of these kinds endear many VNSAs to particular groups of people for two major reasons. One is that, through their services, VNSAs can reach a large number of people and spread their cause and ideology rapidly. In fact, this is the most naïve articulation of the argument in the sense that some VNSAs do not get satisfied with merely reaching out to many people but also embark on an intense process of indoctrination. The second reason is that services provided by VNSAs may help them obtain the support – or at least sympathy or acquiescence – of moderate factions who are indeed against the use of violence.

#### **3.4.4. Exploiting Identities & Creating Different Centers of Authority**

In the first part of this chapter, it was argued that individuals have multiple identities and their loyalty to different actors signify a corresponding multiplicity in centers of authority in the political space. The example given in the section above – that VNSAs can be the main providers of the basic needs at times – is only one of the

ways through which VNSAs may challenge states in acquiring the loyalty of individuals. Through manipulating the values and beliefs of individuals, VNSAs engage in an effort of what might be called “identity engineering.” A religiously motivated VNSA may try appeal to the spiritual identities of individuals while a VNSA functioning for ethnic concerns tries to bring out the ethnic awareness of certain people. As put neatly by Thomas et al. (2005), leadership cadres of many VNSAs include “identity entrepreneurs” who not only exploit identity differences among people but also proactively create them to advance their interests.

An identity entrepreneur is an individual or group of individuals who find it desirable, profitable, or otherwise utilitarian to create or reinforce group identities. They will specifically seek to exploit such volatile situations and will do so by reinforcing perceived identity cleavages or create new ones. The identity entrepreneur is typically a charismatic voice that appeals more to the emotional (rather than rational) side of the individual. This can be done by highlighting, or in many instances embellishing or even creating, injustices to the identity group, myth-creation about the significance of the grouping other times or places, and bringing the borders between the “us” (those in the identity group) and “them”(those outside the identity group, most typically “the enemy”) into sharper focus. Creating such consciousness – real or false – and then exploiting that to move a group toward collective action is the goal of the identity entrepreneur (Thomas et al., 2005: 79).

The phrase “collective action” in the last sentence, I believe, is an outlet for stressing the difference between VNSAs and non-violent NSAs as identity entrepreneurs. In the case of VNSAs, if and when identity entrepreneurs succeed in mobilizing people for a collective action, it is usually in the form of “collective violence” (Thomas et al., 2005). Yet collective action unleashed by other NSAs is usually pacific and tries to put pressure on states or other actors in an accommodating manner. There are surely many NGOs or social movements that might resort to violent methods at times. However, they resort to violence only sporadically, mostly

in exceptional circumstances, and in an unsystematic way. The violence utilized by VNSAs and other NSAs are, therefore, almost incomparable in the sense that violence is the primary and arguably the most effective tool of VNSAs to balance against states and the state-centric system.

#### **3.4.5. Employment of Ahierarchical and Decentralized Network Systems**

Some advantages of network systems were discussed in the first part of this chapter. Certainly not all of the NSAs have network systems, and even those organized in networks are not completely ahierarchical and decentralized. Nonetheless, VNSAs that employ such systems can take advantage of their merits explored earlier. To recap, such network systems are characterized by time-efficient decision-making processes and provide individuals with larger spaces of creativity, which in turn contribute to the flexibility and growth of organizations formed in networks. Ahierarchical and decentralized network systems can be another source of negative entropy for VNSAs. Unlike legal NSAs, VNSAs operate underground and are usually under the pressure of hunt down campaigns of governmental and intergovernmental security agencies. Since the overall power of this type of network systems does not rest on a single center and is rather dispersed among nodes, on occasions where the leadership cadres of are killed or captured, VNSAs may succeed to survive by efforts and vigor of these nodes.

#### **3.4.6. Transcendence of National Boundaries**

That many states can not efficiently control the flow of people and services across national boundaries is another booster for the balancing capacity of VNSAs. First of all, many VNSAs have various illegal transnational links through which they obtain necessary equipments (e.g. weapons or funds) for balancing. It is possible to observe today a tangled web of illicit relationships among different VNSAs where, for instance, criminal organizations and terrorist groups work in collaboration and help each other survive through different means. Second of all, once they begin balancing against states, VNSAs have the capability to carry on their efforts from more than one front. Either because of close linkages among like-minded VNSAs or diffuse networks of a particular VNSA and transitional interactions among them, some states may become entangled in a set of problems originating from different sources. Put differently, collective transnational efforts of local cells of VNSAs as well as their affiliated groups may greatly complicate the strategies of states in defusing VNSA balancing. Lastly, that some important VNSAs such as Al Qaeda have turned out to become almost non-territorial entities; dispersed among various countries in network systems rather than having a fixed territorial base can have another interesting relevance for NSA balancing. Many states can not afford to engage in hard balancing against superior powers for the fear that this might trigger retaliation from these powers and lead to disastrous consequences for them. This is hardly the case for VNSAs that have some sort of a non-territorial identity. They have

less reason to hang back from balancing since they have less reason to fear from retaliation in the form of a military offensive directed at their “home.”<sup>28</sup>

### **3.4.7. Beneficiaries and Exploiters of the Information and Communications Innovation**

Recent technological developments and decreasing costs of communication channels have not been restricted to the use of states or non-violent NSAs. VNSAs, and especially terrorist organizations have exploited these innovations vastly and, as will be shown in the following chapters, the use of technology have proved to be *sine qua non* for the growth and balancing capacity of some transnational VNSAs such as Al Qaeda.

The diversity of both different channels of information and communication systems that VNSAs use and targets that they try to attain by using these different channels can largely explain the existential value of recent revolutionary developments for the balancing potential of VNSAs. On the one hand, since the 1990s, not only Al Qaeda but many other terrorist groups have used a variety of communication and information channels such as the Internet, TV stations, video tapes and audio recordings (Hoffman, 2006: 197-228). On the other hand, by using these channels as propaganda tools, terrorist organizations can have in-group discussions, training or indoctrination; convey their messages to the masses; elicit

---

<sup>28</sup> This has much to do with debates on nuclear terrorism as well. A convincing argument why some terrorist organizations would not hesitate to use weapons of mass destruction against Washington – if they see it necessary – is that “unlike states armed with WMD, a terrorist group has no obvious “return address”” (Walt, 2005: 140) and therefore they have less to fear about an equivalent retaliation.

sympathy and support for their cause and thus get new recruits; and put pressure on governments and undermine their authority (Hoffman, 2006: 199).

These varying information and communication channels may be even more important for the successful development of many non-violent NSAs than they are for the violent ones. Think about the place of the Internet in the usual dealings of NGOs, IGOs or TNCs. But again, what differentiates VNSAs from others in their use of these channels relates to how they serve their motivations. Clever utilization of technological tools can help a TNC in expanding its business, an IGO in better equipping itself in order to close the gaps of the state-centric world, a social movement in mobilizing and acting much more easily and efficiently, an NGO in putting much more pressure on states on particular issues – at times leading to massive changes on some of them –, an influential individual in making his/her voice heard all over the world and thus galvanizing people into action on a particular issue, and a VNSA in blowing up the heart of the “most secure” nation of the world and killing about 3000 people. Although this example may sound reductionist and hyperbolic, it provides additional insight as to why VNSAs is the most eligible type that can balance against states.

### **3.5. Unique Characteristics of NSA Balancing**

When I suggested the need of incorporating NSAs to balance of power theory in Chapter II, I had grounded my argument on three factors: motivation of the balancer, capabilities of the balancer, and the impact of balancing behavior. As far as these three factors were concerned, I showed that NSA balancing is both similar to



and different from state balancing. Now that I provided a detailed account of the changing context and actorness in this chapter, I shall focus more on the unique characteristics of NSA balancing. Although I referred to these characteristics throughout the chapter, it would be useful to provide brief summaries of them in a more systemic and orderly way so that uniqueness of NSA balancing would be clearer.

First of all, NSA balancing is much more liberated than state balancing. Because states are, in Rosenau's terms, sovereignty-bound actors, they are bound by the legal rules and procedures of the state-centric world. This applies to their balancing behavior as well. In general, states engage in balancing within the legal framework of the state-centric world. NSAs, in contrast, can bypass well-established norms of this world such as the rule of law, non-intervention principle, respect for territorial integrity and so forth. They can bend the rules when necessary because of their non-state actorness and their location in the postinternational world structure.

Second of all, NSA balancing is more blunt and brutal than state balancing. In the motivation part, I had argued that NSAs have less to fear to engage in balancing. The same reasons for this lack of fear partially account for the intensity of their balancing attempts and strategies as well. A comparison between balancing of a VNSA and a soft balancing of a state may be useful at this point. VNSAs draw on a variety of sources in balancing, yet arguably the linchpin of VNSA balancing is the violence they unleash. If the actor is capable enough, it can bypass each and every legal norm and inflict unprecedented damage to states through its violent attacks. On the other hand, consider soft balancing attempts of states. Above everything else, soft

balancing is a “last resort balancing” method. Hard balancing can prove to be very costly for a country – both in economic and political terms – which is dissatisfied about the rising power of a preponderant state but which also has key economic and political ties with it. Soft balancing would then seem to be the golden mean for that particular country since it is less likely to directly provoke the preponderant state and thus damage the political and economic ties (see Paul, 2004: 15-16). Thus, it is natural that measures used in soft balancing are way softer than the collective violence of NSA balancing.

Third of all, NSA balancing can come into existence both easier and quicker than state balancing does. The reason once again relates to the complex interdependence within the state-centric world and to the fact that NSAs are outside the state-centric world. The extent of interdependence among states may at times prevent them from balancing against a preponderant power because it might result in grave economic and political consequences for them (see Nye, 1993: 56). Even when states decide on balancing, the whole process leading to the balancing act is far from straightforward. For one thing, since governments are accountable to their constituency that elect them, they may have difficulty in justifying their decision to their public. For instance, in the case of internal hard balancing, states may lose time and energy in getting the approval of the public to spend their wealth for military buildup. For another thing, even a particular state surpasses internal problems, it has to overcome a number of additional pitfalls if it decides to engage in external hard balancing or a concerted soft balancing. In the former, persuading other states into forming a military alliance against the preponderant power is far from easy due to

both domestic political and external interdependence concerns. Moreover, forging formal military alliances usually takes considerable time before coming into existence. In the latter, for effectiveness, soft balancing attempts such as economic alliances or diplomatic efforts usually require the support of other states again. This, in turn, brings about the questions of interdependence and timescale of establishing a concerted alliance. NSA balancing, in contrast, transcends time and space considerations of the state-centric world.

Fourth of all, it appears that NSA balancing is grounded on a larger array of balancing means compared to soft and hard balancing. As a matter of fact, it involves both military means similar to those of hard balancing and non-military means similar to those of soft balancing. Yet, NSA balancing means is unique in the sense that it draws on a number of factors characterizing postinternational politics. NSAs heavily exploit information and communication technologies (e.g. the Internet, satellite TV stations, audio/video tapes), decentralized network systems, dark spots of the state-centric world (e.g. failed/rogue states as safe-havens and recruitment pools), and asymmetric warfare strategies. These not only become part of NSAs' balancing act but also help them survive states' persistent crackdown in the wake of their challenge. Therefore, exploiting a larger array of balancing means is a must rather than a choice for NSAs. It is the only way for them to bridge the gap of traditional military and material capabilities between states and them in the state-centric world. Through these various means, NSAs make sure that balancing dynamics stretch beyond the state-centric world and sprawl over the multi-centric one.

### **3.6. Revisiting the Impact of NSA Balancing: How Does NSA Balancing Contribute to the Dual World Structure?**

In Chapter II, I had argued that just as state balancing has a systemic impact (adding to the continuance of the state-centric world), NSA balancing has an impact on the structure in which takes place. However, since I had not explored postinternational politics and dual world structure, I could not discuss some part of the systemic impact of NSA balancing in that chapter. Now that the theoretical part of this thesis makes much more sense, I will address that question in the final section of this chapter.

Simply put, NSA balancing adds up to the dual structure of postinternational world. On the one hand, NSA balancing plays a role in the continuation and strengthening of the state-centric world. Since NSA balancing triggers state-centric balancing dynamics (and since state-centric balancing ensures the survival of the state-centric world), it has an indirect but critical impact on the maintenance of the state-centric world. What is more, if NSA balancing is violent and/or non-accommodating to the state-centric world, it is likely to promote statist policies and help the state-centric world enlarge. States which are challenged by violent balancing attempts of NSAs usually have recourse to nationalistic, over-protective policies, and tend to evade interactions with other actors while formulating their response. Furthermore, and somehow ironically, if NSA balancing threatens not only one particular state but also most states in the state-centric world, there is a high possibility for the emergence of determined alliances among them in order to have a concerted response against the common threat (Mendelsohn, 2005). These, in turn,

contribute to both hardening of the state-centric world and polarization between the state-centric and multi-centric worlds.

On the other hand, NSA balancing reinforces the multi-centric world in two ways as well. Just like state balancing ensures the survival of states, NSA balancing may help NSAs survive despite constant pressure and persecution of states that respond to this challenge. What is more, if balancing attempt of an NSA proves successful in time, it is highly likely to have a copycat impact. Not only new NSAs – inspired by the balancer NSA – may come into existence but also other existing NSAs – which are willing to emulate the balancer NSA – may be triggered and decide on balancing. Either way, NSA balancing leads to the enlargement of the multi-centric world.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to its strengthening impact on both worlds, NSA balancing forges an inextricable connection between these worlds. For one thing, NSA balancing originates from the multi-centric world and encroaches upon the state-centric one since its targets are states. Moreover, the unique nature of NSA balancing necessitates moving constantly between, and thus taking advantage of, the two worlds. For another thing, when responding to the challenge from NSAs, states have to engage in the multi-centric world. They also do have to be adaptable to constant shifts between the state-centric and multi-centric worlds.

---

<sup>29</sup> This is another resemblance of NSA balancing to the state-centric one. There is a noticeable correlation of state balancing in the multi-centric world which is practiced by the input of NSAs (state balancing strengthening the state-centric world and NSA balancing strengthening the multi-centric one). However, failing to notice the dual structure of world politics at the outset makes it impossible for theorists to acknowledge this correlation and open up balance of power theory to the multi-centric world and its actors.

In short, NSA balancing ensures the survival and solidification of the state-centric and multi-centric worlds. In other words, it attests to the dual structure of world politics. Yet, it also increases the interaction between these two worlds to the maximum. In the final analysis, then, the overall systemic impact that NSA balancing contributes to can be identified as an *inseparable duality*. The interaction between these two worlds has increased such that the state-centric and multi-centric worlds are inextricably linked to each other, and NSA balancing accounts for a good deal of this interaction. A final note is crucial before I move on to the case study of Al Qaeda. Postinternational politics is characterized by a rapid pace of change, coupled with a considerable degree of uncertainty (Rosenau, 1990: 8). The nature of actors (states and non-states) and structures within which they operate, as well as the relationship between these actors and their structures are in a constant metamorphosis. Therefore, NSA balancing, as a pathway of the relationship between actors and their structure, is an evolving, dynamic and transformative phenomenon as well. What one can conclude from these arguments is that the present inseparable duality is by no means absolute and immune from the overall metamorphosis. The future shape of the world structure and actorness within this structure will be determined by the form of the interaction between the state-centric and multi-centric worlds (i.e. confrontational/frictional or cooperative/harmonizing).

## CHAPTER IV

### BALANCING DISCOURSE OF AL QAEDA

*Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts....America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.*

*President George W. Bush,  
Address to the Nation, September 11, 2001<sup>30</sup>*

*Contrary to what [President George W.] Bush says and claims – that we hate freedom –let him tell us then, "Why did we not attack Sweden?".... We fought with you because we are free, and we don't put up with transgressions. We want to reclaim our nation. As you spoil our security, we will do so to you.*

*Osama Bin Laden, October 29, 2004<sup>31</sup>*

*Real terrorists don't want to kill a lot of people. Rather, they use limited, but indiscriminate, violence or hijacking to create noise or fear that draws attention to their cause and ultimately builds political or diplomatic pressure for a specific purpose. That's why Osama bin Laden is not a mere terrorist. He has much larger aspirations. He is a super-empowered angry man who has all the geopolitical objectives and instincts of a nation-state.*

*Thomas Friedman<sup>32</sup>*

---

<sup>30</sup> See "Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation," 2001.

<sup>31</sup> See "Bin Laden: Your Security is in Your Own Hands," 2004.

<sup>32</sup> See Friedman (2003: 144).

Having maintained that the traditional balance of power theory falls short of appreciating the shift to a different world structure and thus explaining balancing attempts of NSAs today, it is now essential to substantiate these arguments. The present chapter is the first part of my case study of NSA balancing, namely Al Qaeda's balancing against the United States. This chapter addresses the discourse of Al Qaeda on balancing against the United States and creating a different balance of power in world politics. In the first section, I will examine what Al Qaeda represents and how they started a war on the United States. Subsequent to a discussion on the main reasons of the rage of Jihadis at the United States, I will concentrate more on what they aim to achieve in the short and long term. Then, I will explore why Al Qaeda's discourse on their objectives and singling out the United States as the main enemy carries a considerable sense of balancing behavior aimed at a particular balance of power. I will finally conclude with an analysis of why Al Qaeda's balancing appears to be more of a political than a religious struggle at the discursive level.

#### **4.1. Motivations of Al Qaeda: What Does it Really Want?**

The question of what drove Al Qaeda to declare war on a superpower is the bottom line of this chapter. In order to understand the discourse of Al Qaeda on what it aims to achieve, it is essential to bear in mind how violent Jihadists decided to confront the United States.



#### **4.1.1. A Political Contest within the Muslim World**

What Al Qaeda wants is directly related to what it is a part of. Just as most of individual collectivities, the Islamist community is not a homogenous group. There are a variety of Islamist movements, which differ in a number of rudimentary issues such as how “genuine Islam” should be, what Islam’s role (if any) in politics should be, and how one should deal with those who oppose traditions and practices of the genuine Islam. These make up only a very small part of a long list of contentious issues. Yet what matters most is that these different understandings suggest a highly stratified Islamic community.

To cut a long story short, Al Qaeda is a group in the Salafi community. The reason why this particular group of people is called Salafis is their belief that genuine Islam is the Islam practiced by the Prophet Mohammed and their companions (salaf). Since they had first-hand experience of the Prophet’s life, his words and deeds, an authentic model of Islam can be achieved by rigidly following their example (Wiktorowicz, 2005: 75; Doran, 2001: 34; Wiktorowicz & Kaltner, 2003: 78). However, there is hardly unanimity among Salafis as well. Al Qaeda is an example of Jihadis which is a Salafi group and differs from others by employing mainly violence to meet their objectives (Wiktorowicz, 2006: 208; Doran, 2001: 34-35; Wiktorowicz & Kaltner, 2003: 78).

The core argument of Jihadis, as suggested above, was that Muslims were not governed by genuine Islamic practices. Above all, Arab regimes were not enforcing the Islamic law (Sharia) and thus they were not Islamic at all (Zimmerman, 2004: 237). This had largely accounted for why the Islamic nation (ummah) had long fallen

behind the Western world and was afflicted with suffering and misery. Evoking the political, economic and military strength of Muslims in earlier centuries, especially at the time of the Prophet Mohammed and their companions, Jihadis believed that Muslims' current status was indeed a blow to their pride. A good deal of the responsibility for this overall decay of Muslim influence belonged to Arab regimes which ignored Islamic laws in their governance and allowed Western powers to hold all the strings in Arab politics despite the Western intentions on devastating the Muslim world and its religion Islam (see Wiktorowicz, 2005: 75-83). Then, the common point on which different Jihadi groups converged was the need to reverse this process through violence. The ultimate goal was to galvanize Muslims into rebelling against their regimes (Doran, 2001: 32), oust these regimes (either with or without the societal support), and unite Muslims all over the globe – the Islamic nation – under a restored Caliphate (Whelan, 2005: 86; Mendelsohn, 2005: 60). Only within this Caliphate could Muslims be governed properly and have an opportunity to remedy the humiliated political and economic status of the Muslim world. In short, Jihadis were involved in a contest for political power with more moderate factions of the Muslim world. This was a “clash inside a civilization, a battle for the future of the Muslim world” (“The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” 2002; see also Doran, 2001).

#### **4.1.2. Shifting the Focus of the Fight towards the Far Enemy**

As far as this struggle within the Muslim world is concerned, the nub of the matter is that Jihadis were usually the underdogs. They unleashed violence and fear,

but the response of Arab regimes was no less harsh. In a number of countries such as Egypt and Algeria, there was a military crackdown on Jihadi groups with the purpose of pushing them to the edges of marginalization within the societies (Takeyh & Gvosdev, 2004; Doran, 2001: 43; Wiktorowicz & Kaltner, 2003: 79-80). Even during periods when they managed to come to power, their performance of governing was far below the expectations of their community (Takeyh & Gvosdev, 2004).

How Osama Bin Laden and his lieutenants interpreted these developments marked a watershed in the evolution of Al Qaeda and the larger Jihadi movement. They concluded that the biggest impediment to the reunification of the Islamic nation, which would be followed by the restoration of the power of the Muslim world, was indeed the Western world. As long as the Western support for the corrupt regimes of the Middle East continued, they argued, efforts of Jihadis would prove futile. Jihadis had to overcome the “far enemy” (the Western world and especially the United States) in order to get rid of the “near enemy” (Middle Eastern regimes). (Whelan, 2005: 89, 96; Mohamedou, 2007: 45).<sup>33</sup> Put differently, Bin Laden concluded that the Zionist-Crusader alliance was the “root of the problem” and hence the only way of correcting injustices against Muslims and restoring their power was to eradicate the root initially (“Bin Laden’s Fatwa,” 1996).<sup>34</sup> If they could fight the West and end their interference in the affairs of the Muslim world, corrupt rulers of Muslim societies would fall down one by one; with the consequence of Jihadis taking the

---

<sup>33</sup> This reasoning was mentioned by Ayman al-Zawahiri himself, Al Qaeda’s number-two man, in his book entitled *Knights under the Prophet’s Banner* (Ryan, 2007: 992).

<sup>34</sup> It appears that, in making this assessment, Bin Laden was influenced by the experience of Ibn Taymiyyah, who was an Islamic scholar living in the Middle Ages. Bin Laden quotes Taymiyyah saying that “people of Islam should join forces and support each other to get rid of the main “Kufr” who is controlling the countries of the Islamic world, even to bear the lesser damage to get rid of the major one, that is the great Kufr” and that “to repel the greatest of the two dangers on the expense of the lesser one is an Islamic principle which should be observed” (“Bin Laden’s Fatwa,” 1996).

driver's seat, steering the ummah to genuine Islam and returning to the glorious days of earlier centuries.

## **4.2. Reasons for the Anger of Jihadis at the Far Enemy**

After Al Qaeda concluded that the West – and particularly the United States – was responsible for (1) avoiding the restoration of the Caliphate under a unified Islamic nation and (2) humiliation, suffering, and weakness of the Muslim world, it decided to declare a holy war against the West.

Al Qaeda's discourse on this war on the far enemy is characterized by three major points, which are expressed frequently by the group and account for their anger at the Western world. These points outline the group's aims in this war as well and are considered as hurdles to be cleared in order to achieve its long-term goals.

### **4.2.1. American Occupation of the Muslim World**

#### **4.2.1.1. Responsibility for Muslim Killings throughout the World**

One of the most important sources of Al Qaeda's rage is atrocities towards Muslims all over the world. In his statements, Bin Laden frequently draws attention to Muslim sufferings for which he holds the Western world and especially the United States responsible. A thorough reading of his statements makes clear that he is deeply sorrowful about killings of Muslims not only in Palestine but in a number of countries.

In the first declaration of war entitled “Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Land of the Two Holy Places”, Bin Laden points out:

Their [Muslims'] blood was spilled in Palestine and Iraq. The horrifying pictures of the massacre of Qana, in Lebanon are still fresh in our memory. Massacres in Tajikistan, Burma, Cashmere, Assam, Philippine, Fatani, Ogadin, Somalia, Erithria, Chechnia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina took place, massacres that send shivers in the body and shake the conscience. All of this and the world watch and hear, and not only didn't respond to these atrocities, but also with a clear conspiracy between the USA and its' allies and under the cover of the iniquitous United Nations, the dispossessed people were even prevented from obtaining arms to defend themselves (“Bin Laden’s Fatwa,” 1996).

In these accusations, some examples that stand out in Bin Laden’s statements and interviews are “executing more than 600 thousand Muslim children in Iraq by preventing food and medicine from reaching them” (during the American sanction on Iraq) (“Transcript of Osama Bin Ladin Interview,” 1997), allowing “Serbian butchers to slaughter Muslims” (“Interview of Usama Bin Ladin,” 1998), supporting atrocities against Muslims in Chechnya by Russians, in Kashmir by Indians, in Lebanon by Jews (“Full Text: Bin Laden’s ‘Letter to America’,” 2002), and using disproportionate force in the Afghan War of 2001 during which innocents are killed and worshippers in mosques are purposefully targeted (“Transcript: Bin Laden Video Excerpts,” 2001).

All in all, for Al Qaeda leadership, the Islamic world is under attack. It is the United States that leads this all-out assault on Muslims, and Muslims cannot feel secure and esteemed as long as Washington keeps this sinful aggressiveness. The natural corollary of this understanding is that every Muslim should join the war

against the Crusader-Zionist alliance not only to stop this degradation but also to stay alive.

#### **4.2.1.2. Military Occupation of the Holy Places**

Bin Laden lays special emphasis on the presence of American soldiers in the land of the two Holy Places, Saudi Arabia since cities of Mecca and Medina have historical and religious importance for all Muslims. For Bin Laden, military occupation of the land of these Holy Places, which are “the foundation of the house of Islam, the place of the revelation, the source of the message and the place of the noble Ka’ba , the Qiblah of all Muslims,” is totally unacceptable (“Bin Laden’s Fatwa,” 1996). This is mostly because of his belief that presence of non-Muslims in this land is not allowed according to Islam. This is also why Bin Laden urged back in 1996 not only American soldiers but also American civilians to leave his country (“Bin Laden’s Fatwa,” 1996).

#### **4.2.1.3. Economic Exploitation of the Muslim World**

The third point for which Bin Laden vests his anger on the so-called Zionist-Crusader alliance is the current economic misery of the Islamic world. For Bin Laden, the United States is almost in charge of the Saudi economic policies and frequently manipulates the regime in implementing policies that serve American interests. His criticisms revolve around – but are not limited to – the management of the largest oil reserves that Saudi Arabia has in the world.

The crusader forces became the main cause of our disastrous condition, particularly in the economical aspect of it due to the unjustified heavy

spending on these forces. As a result of the policy imposed on the country, especially in the field of oil industry where production is restricted or expanded and prices are fixed to suit the American economy ignoring the economy of the country. Expensive deals were imposed on the country to purchase arms (“Bin Laden’s Fatwa,” 1996).

In short, it is argued that, through its economic occupation, the United States strips Muslims of their own wealth.

#### **4.2.1.4. Cultural Contamination**

Finally, Jihadis argue that Americans’ degenerate culture and decadent lifestyle pose a threat to the Islamic identity of the Muslim world. For Bin Laden, using man-made laws, separating religion from politics, permitting usury and gambling, allowing “the production, trading and usage of intoxicants”, and the “acts of immorality” on the pretext of “personal freedom”, exploiting “women like consumer products or advertising tools upon consumers to purchase them”, and spreading “diseases that were unknown to the man in the past” such as AIDS are only some of the examples characterizing the American lifestyle (“Full Text: Bin Laden’s ‘Letter to America’,” 2002). These practices are strictly forbidden in Islam, yet by providing an example – and more importantly by leading to the spread of these practices not only in the Muslim but also in the whole world – Americans are indeed responsible for contaminating the minds and hearts of the people.

#### **4.2.2. American Support for the State of Israel**

Like many of different violent Salafi groups, Al Qaeda has a profound hatred for Jews and the State of Israel. In Jihadis’ thinking, Zionists are almost “natural

enemies” of the Muslim world; having a lifetime dedication to attack Islam and Muslims. For Bin Laden, Americans and Zionists are the vanguard in the fight against Islam and are responsible for the massacres of Muslims (“Interview of Usama Bin Ladin,” 1998). Putting their particular hatred for Islam and Muslims aside, Jews are believed to be “the lords of usury and leaders of treachery”; to consider that “Mankind are slaves to them, and whoever refuses to serve them deserves to be killed”; to have “lied and tried to trick the Creator”, and “killed the Prophets and broke their promises” (“Exposing the New Crusader War,” 2003).

There are a number of significant points in the discourse of Al Qaeda as far as the American support for Israel is concerned. Firstly, Al Qaeda blames Americans for their assistance in the creation of the State of Israel. The establishment of a Jewish state in the Holy Land of Muslims is not only humiliating but also unlawful. In a 2002 letter to the American people, Bin Laden stated:

The creation and continuation of Israel is one of the greatest crimes, and you are the leaders of its criminals. And of course there is no need to explain and prove the degree of American support for Israel. The creation of Israel is a crime which must be erased. Each and every person whose hands have become polluted in the contribution towards this crime must pay its price, and pay for it heavily (“Full Text: Bin Laden’s ‘Letter to America’,” 2002).

Secondly, Jews have been unleashing their hatred towards Islam and Muslims by using their state as a military front against Palestinians. The United States shares the guilt of the suffering and tragedy of Palestinians because it always turns a blind eye to Israel’s atrocities against innocent Palestinian civilians (“Transcript of Osama Bin Ladin Interview,” 1997). Thirdly, Washington makes every effort to secure the existence of Israel. What is more sinister is that it does so by trying to break up Muslim countries in the Middle East and thus undermine their power vis-à-vis Israel



(“Al Qaeda’s Fatwa,” 1998). This would, in turn, help the Crusaders in one of their major goals: creating Greater Israel on the lands of Arab countries (“Exposing the New Crusader War,” 2003).

From the perspective of Jihadis, Jews are more threatening and dangerous for Muslims than many would think. A number of governments – and not only American ones – have bowed to Israeli demands and “mobilized their people against Islam and against Muslims” (“Interview of Usama Bin Ladin,” 1998). Yet, for Bin Laden, the Jewish penetration into the American governmental bodies is distinctly profound.

The American government, we think, is an agent that represents the Israel inside America. If we look at sensitive departments in the present government like the defense department or the state department, or sensitive security departments like the CIA and others, we find that Jews have the first word in the American government, which is how they use America to carry out their plans in the world and especially the Muslim world. The presence of Americans in the Holy Land supports the Jews and gives them a safe back (“Interview of Usama Bin Ladin,” 1998).

#### **4.2.3. Corrupt and Illegitimate Arab Regimes**

For a number of reasons, Al Qaeda considers the Saudi regime as well as a number of Arab regimes as corrupt and illegitimate. As already mentioned, Jihadis’ war within the Muslim community and their failure to take the driver’s seat was a turning point for the evolution of Al Qaeda. Therefore, the reasons why Jihadis have struggled to undermine and ultimately oust these regimes are of the utmost importance for understanding this evolution.

Before elaborating on, it should be noted that, above everything else, Al Qaeda despises these regimes for being American agents and serving American interests at the expense of the security and dignity of Muslims (see “Transcript of

Osama Bin Ladin Interview,” 1997; “Full Text: Bin Laden’s ‘Letter to America’,” 2002). The Zionist-Crusader alliance is behind almost everything bad about the Islamic community. In other words, Americans and its puppet regimes go half and half regarding the current situation of the Islamic world. For this reason, it would be appropriate for readers to evaluate more specific concerns of Al Qaeda (listed below) in this light. Almost all of these concerns apply not only to the near but also to the far enemy.

#### **4.2.3.1. Allowing the Occupation of Muslim Lands**

Al Qaeda puts the blame on Arab regimes for allowing the occupation of Muslim lands and thereby conniving at the oppression and humiliation of Muslims. There is a religious dimension of this humiliation discourse of Al Qaeda in the sense that occupation of the Holy Land is forbidden in Islam. Bin Laden underlines this belief by referring to the Prophet Mohammed about the need to drive Christians and Jews out of the Arabian Peninsula (“Bin Laden’s Fatwa,” 1996). Yet political concerns of Bin Laden about the occupation seem to override this religious dimension. Above military occupation, it is mostly political and economic occupation of Americans that account for the humiliation of Muslims (see below). As long as Arab regimes allow such an occupation of Americans in the region, true Muslims can not have a say in the political and economic management of the Islamic world. These regimes not only strip Muslims of their wealth (due to their cooperation with Washington) but also concede to Jewish demands in the Arab-Israeli conflict (“Full Text: Bin Laden’s ‘Letter to America’,” 2002).

#### **4.2.3.2. Suspending Sharia and Repressing the Ulema (Scholars of Islam)**

That man-made civil laws are chosen over the Islamic law, Sharia, in Muslim societies is, arguably, the most important factor that spurred Al Qaeda to fight against both the near and far enemy. For Jihadis, corrupt Arab regimes resort to every possible way – including deception of the people and even violence – in order to avoid the practice of Sharia (“Full Text: Bin Laden’s ‘Letter to America’,” 2002; “Bin Laden’s Fatwa,” 1996). What is more, “the truthful Ulema” who try to pull Muslims in “the true path” has been victimized by these regimes. They are imprisoned and murdered. The communication between Muslims and these scholars, as well as Bin Laden himself and his constituency, has been thwarted in order to avoid the spread of their messages across Muslims (“Bin Laden’s Fatwa,” 1996).

For Al Qaeda, rather than taking advantage of the knowledge of the truthful Ulema, many Arab regimes use Islamic clerics that contaminate the minds of the Muslim youth. In a 2003 speech, Bin Laden calls these clerics as “the prisoners and hostages of the tyrants” (“A New Bin Laden Speech,” 2003). Rather than believing in the need for Jihad and working for the spread of it, these clerics are “busy handing out praise and words of glory to the despotic imams [i.e. Arab rulers] who disbelieved Allah and His Prophet” (“A New Bin Laden Speech,” 2003). Bin Laden also argues that some of the Muslim youth do not join their movement because messages of these puppet clerics spread quickly through the mass media (“A New Bin Laden Speech,” 2003).

#### **4.2.3.3. Causing Economic and Social Failure**

The economic and social distress of the Islamic world is another important outlet for Al Qaeda's enmity towards the near enemy. For Bin Laden, the Saudi regime is directly responsible for the impoverishment of the Muslim community. In his 1996 fatwa, he refers to a report entitled "Memorandum of Advice" which was prepared and signed by key dissidents of the regime and sent to King Fahd back in 1992. The report warned the King about the adverse condition that the country and its people were in. Among other things, it gave an account of not only financial and economic but also social and infrastructural difficulties (e.g. inadequacy of the water supply) as well as advices to overcome these problems. However, Bin Laden argues that this report was overlooked and its supporters were victimized by the regime ("Bin Laden's Fatwa," 1996).

To be more specific, Bin Laden is highly critical of rampant inflation, low incomes of employees, heavy debts of the government to the business class, and the value of the Riyal (Saudi currency) vis-à-vis other currencies. For Bin Laden, given the largest oil reserves in the world and huge amount of oil exports of the Saudi regime, such economic problems are unacceptable ("Bin Laden's Fatwa," 1996).

As previously argued, Bin Laden maintains that it is the American administrations that are in control of the Saudi economy, and Saudi oil reserves in particular. It can be observed in Bin Laden's statements that he is closely interested in developments of the oil sector and condemns the Saudi regime for succumbing to the American pressure and thus failing to take advantage of this valuable resource. In 1997, for instance, he argued that "current prices are not realistic due to the Saudi

regime playing the role of a US agent and the pressures exercised by the US on the Saudi regime to increase production and flooding the market that caused a sharp decrease in oil prices” (“Transcript of Osama Bin Ladin Interview,” 1997).

#### **4.3. Short-term Objectives**

To this point, I have argued that Jihadis shifted their focus to the far enemy (the West/particularly the United States) in order to overthrow their near enemy (corrupt and illegitimate Middle Eastern regimes) with the long-term objective of uniting the Muslim world under a single Islamic Caliphate. I have also tried to show that, in this war against the far enemy, the most frequently mentioned concerns of Al Qaeda in its discourse are (1) American occupation (military, political, economic and cultural) of the Muslim world, (2) American support for Israel, and (3) American support for corrupt and illegitimate Arab regimes. For Jihadis, these three concerns constitute an important part of Muslims’ humiliation and loss of pride.

At this point, understanding what Al Qaeda expects to gain in the short-term seems rather simple: putting an end to these three concerns. Ending these would eradicate the source of both insecurity and humiliation of Muslims.

##### **4.3.1. Ending the American Occupation of the Muslim World**

In a number of official statements, interviews, and speeches, Bin Laden has called Americans and their allies to stop their aggression against Muslims and leave the Holy Land immediately. In effect, for Bin Laden, fighting for this cause – forcing the enemy into ending its occupation – is an individual duty in their religion

(“Transcript of Osama Bin Ladin Interview,” 1997; “Interview of Usama Bin Ladin,” 1998; “Transcript of Bin Laden’s October Interview,” 2001). Adhering to this “duty” of Jihad is necessary “in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim” (“Al Qaeda’s Fatwa,” 1998).

Ending the military occupation and violence directed at Muslims seem to be at the core of Al Qaeda’s short-term motives as far as the American occupation is concerned. Yet scholars fail to appreciate Bin Laden’s intentions regarding the American economy. Even at the outset, when Bin Laden first declared the need to fight Americans in 1996, it was clear that he had a multilateral scheme in his mind. Both avoiding Washington to exploit the region’s resources and inflicting any sort of economic damage to the enemy were seen as complements to the overall military fight. With this line of reasoning, Bin Laden has even urged a boycotting of American goods.

My Muslim Brothers (particularly those of the Arab Peninsula): The money you pay to buy American goods will be transformed into bullets and used against our brothers in Palestine and tomorrow (future) against our sons in the land of the two Holy places. By buying these goods we are strengthening their economy while our dispossession and poverty increases....

To deny these occupiers from the enormous revenues of their trading with our country is a very important help for our Jihad against them....

If economical boycotting is intertwined with the military operations of the Mujahideen, then defeating the enemy will be even nearer, by the Permission of Allah. However if Muslims don't co-operate and support their Mujahideen brothers then, in effect, they are supplying the army of the enemy with financial help and extending the war and increasing the suffering of the Muslims (“Bin Laden’s Fatwa,” 1996).<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Al Qaeda leaders continued emphasizing this point after September 11 attacks as well. In a video speech aired three months after the attacks, Bin Laden stated that “it is important to hit the economy (of the United States), which is the base of its military power...If the economy is hit they will become

Finally, though less frequently, one can find calls of Al Qaeda leaders for Americans to change their lifestyle and values so that their cultural contamination would come to an end. For instance, in 2002, Bin Laden called Americans “to be a people of manners, principles, honour, and purity; to reject the immoral acts of fornication, homosexuality, intoxicants, gambling’s, and trading with interest” (“Full Text: Bin Laden’s ‘Letter to America’,” 2002).

As far as this cultural dimension is concerned, the central point for this study is that Jihadis want to prevent the spread of certain cultural practices and values. They are resentful about the globalization of Western cultural values and practices which could in time lead to the disappearance of other cultural systems (particularly the Islamic culture). Therefore, in addition to more hardcore security concerns, Al Qaeda’s balancing is “engendered by a need to assert identity or meaning against forces of homogeneity” as well (Cronin, 2002/03: 52).<sup>36</sup>

---

reoccupied” (“Transcript: Bin Laden Video Excerpts,” 2001). It should be noted that the aim of causing economic losses was not limited to the United States. Jihadis were intent on damaging economies of Washington’s Western allies as well as cooperative Arab regimes based on the simple consciousness that economic losses in one of them would ripple through other enemies. With this line of reasoning, Abdul Azziz al-Moqrin – who was believed to be the leader of the organization’s operations in Saudi Arabia – called for hitting economic targets in 2004 in order to “destabilize the situation”, “scare foreign companies from working there and stealing Muslim treasures”, and “have foreign investment withdrawn from local markets” (Hoffman, 2006: 218).

<sup>36</sup> An interesting example relating to the cultural occupation dimension is a particular experience of Mohammed Atta, who played a key role in carrying out September 11 attacks. It is argued that, while Atta was in Egypt, he felt quite offended upon hearing that an “Islamic Disneyland” was planned to be built in Egypt for tourism purposes (Freeman, 2008: 48). For him, an amusement park representing certain features of the Western culture in an Islamic state was a source of cultural, social and religious humiliation for Muslims. Yet, Atta believed that the United States was no less responsible than the Egyptian government because it was corrupting his state (Burke cited in Freeman, 2008: 48).

#### **4.3.2. Ending the American Support for Israel**

Bin Laden frequently calls for Washington to end its material and ideological support for the State of Israel. In a 2001 interview with an Al-Jazeera correspondent, Bin Laden put it bluntly:

We swore that America wouldn't live in security until we live it truly in Palestine. This showed the reality of America, which puts Israel's interest above its own people's interest. America won't get out of this crisis until it gets out of the Arabian Peninsula, and until it stops its support of Israel. This equation can be understood by any American child, but Bush, because he's an Israeli agent, cannot understand this equation unless the swords threatened him above his head ("Transcript of Bin Laden's October Interview," 2001).

Bin Laden invokes this support in order to justify Al Qaeda's terrorist attacks as well. In a 2001 video, he argued that "terrorism against America deserves to be praised because it was a response to injustice, aimed at forcing America to stop its support for Israel, which kills our people" ("Transcript: Bin Laden Video Excerpts," 2001).<sup>37</sup>

#### **4.3.3. Ending the American Support for Corrupt and Illegitimate Arab Regimes**

Al Qaeda labels the Saudi regime as well as a number of Middle Eastern governments as merely agents of the United States. For Jihadis, what lies at the root of the occupation of Muslim lands, suspension of Sharia and repression of the Ulema, and economic and social failures in the Islamic world is the collaboration of Arab rulers with the American government. Therefore, breaking this close link – by forcing Americans into ending their involvement in the affairs of the Muslim world – is highly prioritized by Al Qaeda (see "Full Text: Bin Laden's 'Letter to America'," 2002).

---

<sup>37</sup> See also ("Bin Laden Speech Excerpts," 2002) and ("Full Text: Bin Laden's 'Letter to America'," 2002) for similar calls of Bin Laden for the United States to stop supporting Israel.



#### **4.4. Signs of Balancing in the Short-term Objectives**

We now know that Bin Laden constantly calls for Jihad in order to end the American occupation of the Muslim world as well as its support for Israel and corrupt Arab regimes. These objectives in Al Qaeda's discourse are largely noticed in the literature. However, only a few has tried to relate them to the IR theory in general, and to balance of power theory in particular. In this part, I will try to understand Al Qaeda's discourse on its fight with the United States from a theoretical perspective.

The nub of my argument about Al Qaeda's discourse is that Jihadis' language and terminology denote a balancing behavior in the short term with the purpose of achieving changes in the balance of power in the medium and long term.

Two expressions are of the paramount importance to begin with: "self-defense" and "retaliation." Bin Laden has insistently maintained that Al Qaeda's fight against the United States is defensive in nature and is a response to the atrocities of Americans against the Muslim world.

One of the most striking messages that Bin Laden tries to convey to his constituency and international community is a familiar one that we usually hear from statesmen: "We are under attack!" In effect, Jihadis lay their whole strategy on this ground; that they are under attack, that they have to defend themselves to survive and that they have to retaliate to deter Washington from occupying Muslim lands and intervening in their politics. The same as in state-to-state balancing, in short, maximizing security is the linchpin of Al Qaeda's discourse in its fight against Americans. Equally important is the choice of tactics in this defense. For Al Qaeda, the best defense is offense. Inflicting military, economic, political and psychological

damage on the enemy to the fullest extent is considered the most effective method of defense. Only through such an all-out retaliation would incessant suffering and humiliation of Muslims come to an end.

In a 1999 interview, Bin Laden said:

As I said, we are pursuing our rights to have them [the Americans] evicted from the Muslim world countries and to prevent them from dominating us. We believe that the right to self-defense is to be enjoyed by all people....

Let us say that there are two parties to the conflict: The first party is world Christianity, which is allied with Zionist Jewry and led by the United States, Britain, and Israel; while the second party is the Muslim world. In such a conflict, it is unacceptable to see the first party mount attacks, desecrate my lands and holy shrines, and plunder the Muslims' oil. When it is met by any resistance on the part of the Muslims, this party brands the Muslims as terrorists. This is stupidity. People's intelligence is being belittled. We believe that it is our religious duty to resist this occupation with all the power that we have and to punish it using the same means it is pursuing against us ("Transcript of "Usamah Bin-Ladin, the Destruction of the Base", 1999).

Only one month after the September 11 attacks Bin Laden argued that:

What America is tasting now is something insignificant compared to what we have tasted for scores of years. Our nation (the Islamic world) has been tasting this humiliation and this degradation for more than 80 years. Its sons are killed, its blood is shed, its sanctuaries are attacked, and no one hears and no one heeds....

To America, I say only a few words to it and its people. I swear by God, who has elevated the skies without pillars, *neither America nor the people who live in it will dream of security before we live it in Palestine* [emphasis added], and not before all the infidel armies leave the land of Muhammad, peace be upon him ("In Osama Bin Laden's Own Words," 2001).

In a 2001 interview, after arguing for several times that Al Qaeda is indeed defending Muslims and Islamic values, Bin Laden made a striking comment and brought up a different kind of balance:

Just as they're killing us, we have to kill them so that there will be a *balance of terror* [emphasis added]. This is the first time the balance of terror has been close between the two parties, between Muslims and Americans, in the

modern age. American politicians used to do whatever they wanted with us. The victim was forbidden to scream or to moan [unintelligible] (“Transcript of Bin Laden’s October Interview,” 2001).

In a 2002 audiotape message, he argued that:

*The road to safety begins by ending the aggression.* [emphasis added]

Reciprocal treatment is part of justice.

The incidents that have taken place since the raids on New York and Washington up until now - like the killing of Germans in Tunisia and the French in Karachi, the bombing of the giant French tanker in Yemen, the killing of marines in Failaka [in Kuwait] and the British and Australians in the Bali explosions, the recent operation in Moscow and some sporadic operations here and there - are only reactions and reciprocal actions (“Full Text: ‘Bin Laden’s Message’,” 2002).

Finally, in a 2002 letter to the American people, the first answer that Bin Laden gave to the question of why they are fighting and opposing the United States was: “Because you attacked us and continue to attack us” (“Full Text: Bin Laden’s ‘Letter to America’,” 2002).<sup>38</sup>

When one considers such statements, coupled with Jihadis’ general concerns discussed earlier, it is noticeable that what characterizes Al Qaeda’s discourse on its fight with the United States is a sense of fear resulting from an American threat that jeopardizes Muslims’ security. From the perspective of Jihadis, since the whole Muslim world is threatened by an imperial power, Muslims have to join Jihad against Americans in order to secure their existence. They should undermine American

---

<sup>38</sup> Another noteworthy point that Jihadis emphasize is that Western aggression towards the Muslim world is indeed traceable back to the age of the Crusades, and that current American aggression is a continuation of this long-standing hostility (Whelan, 2005: 97-98; see “Transcript of Bin Laden’s October Interview,” 2001). Without a doubt, asserting that there has been a series of violence directed at Muslims from the early ages on enhances the influence of Jihadis’ messages to their constituency and helps Jihadis inflame Muslims’ anger further. Several events such as America’s war in Iraq, its practices in Abu Ghraib prison and at the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp make it easier for Jihadis to convince the Muslim world about the Western aggression (Whelan, 2005: 98). Aware of this fact, Al Qaeda leaders use every opportunity to invoke what happens in these places and draw attention to the Muslim suffering.

power – political, military and economic – to the fullest extent in order to eliminate this threat.

Then it becomes clear that Al Qaeda's discourse appears to entail a call for balancing. In the short-term, Al Qaeda wishes to balance against the United States in order to end its occupation and its support for Israel and Arab regimes for the reason that it is these three factors that threaten Muslims' security. Yet, what is different in Al Qaeda's balancing discourse from that of a state is the presence of what I called in chapter II "deterritorial sources of security maximization." Unlike states, Al Qaeda does not claim to be securing a particular piece of territory within fixed national frontiers. Bin Laden and his lieutenants repeatedly assert that the Christian-Zionist alliance led by the United States threatens the security of (1) the life of Muslims all over the globe, (2) Islam, (3) Muslims' economic well-being, and (4) Islamic culture, norms and practices. In other words, they identify their security with the security of (1) a deterritorial constituency (e.g. Muslims all over the globe) (see Whelan, 2005: 100) and (2) ideational themes (e.g. Islam and Islamic way of life). Maximizing security lies at the core of Al Qaeda's discourse and it is the primary reason why I argue that Al Qaeda's challenge can be explored under the balancing framework. However, what Al Qaeda tries to secure transcends the state-centric sources of security maximization.

A final point is essential to substantiate my argument that Al Qaeda's discourse relates to balance of threat theory. It was discussed earlier that balance of threat theory differs from the traditional balance of power theory in the sense that not only increasing power but also offensive intentions and capabilities of a state is

reckoned with in the former. To be clearer, a state is more likely to engage in balancing if it is threatened by the aggressive intentions and capabilities of another state. This consideration applies to the case of Al Qaeda as well. For Jihadis, one of the reasons why the United States is singled out in the fight against the far enemy is that it has the most aggressive intentions (besides having the most aggregate power and most offensive capabilities) against the Muslim world. In a 1998 interview, for instance, Bin Laden argued that they call for other nations to embrace Islam and will not relent in issuing this “invitation.” However, they “fight against” governments which are responsible for religious, political and economic suffering of the Muslim world (“Interview of Usama Bin Ladin,” 1998). In 2004, Bin Laden made it even clearer that he differentiates Western powers based on their aggression towards Muslims. Contradicting the argument that Al Qaeda fights the United States for its hatred of the American lifestyle, democratic values and so forth, Bin Laden stated: “Contrary to what [President George W.] Bush says and claims – that we hate freedom – let him tell us then, “Why did we not attack Sweden?”” (“Bin Laden: Your Security is in Your Own Hands,” 2004). What these suggest is that Al Qaeda claims its fight to be reactive, not proactive. It claims to be unleashing violence not for promoting their ideals but for protecting them. That is another reason why Al Qaeda’s challenge should be explored within the framework of balance of power theory; the same as the discourse of state balancing is defensive in nature, Al Qaeda’s discourse is characterized by defensive themes.

#### **4.5. Signs of Balancing in the Short-to-Medium Term Objectives**

The reason why Jihadis shifted their focus to the United States was their aspiration to overthrow Arab regimes whom they consider illegal and corrupt. Therefore, by fighting against Americans, Jihadis plan to kill two birds with one stone. If they succeed, they will both have ended the violence directed at Muslims and their religion and have seized control of the Muslim countries. The latter, in turn, would clear the road to their grander ambition; the restoration of the Caliphate under a unified Islamic state. In short, by ending the American support to Arab regimes, Al Qaeda aspires to the downfall of these regimes and thus gain the upper hand vis-à-vis the near enemy.

This part of the whole story fits in balance of power theory as well. From all these discussions, it can be construed that just as Al Qaeda's balancing act was designed to ensure Muslims' security in the short-term, it was designed to achieve a new balance of power within the Islamic world in the short-to-medium term (which would serve to the short-term design as well). Put differently, if Jihadis succeed in taking control of the Muslim countries (and in commanding their politics, economics, and militaries), this would surely mean a new distribution of power; not among states, but among different factions within the Islamic world (between more moderate factions of political Islamists and Jihadis in this case).

#### 4.6. Signs of Balancing in the Long-term Objectives

Despite concentrating all their efforts on fighting the far enemy first, it seems that Jihadis have not given up hope of establishing a unified Islamic state some day.

Al Qaeda's ultimate goal was clearly expressed by al-Zawahiri in 2001.

Victory for the Islamic movements against the Crusader alliance cannot be attained unless these movements possess an Islamic base in the heart of the Arab region.... The jihad movement must adopt its plan on the basis of controlling a piece of land in the heart of the Islamic world on which it could establish and protect the state of Islam.... If the successful operations against Islam's enemies and the severe damage inflicted upon them do not serve the ultimate goal of establishing the Muslim nation in the heart of the Islamic world, they will be nothing more than disturbing acts.... The restoration of the caliphate and the dismissal of the invaders from the land of the Islam...must remain the basic objective of the Islamic jihad movement, regardless of the sacrifices and the time involved (al Zawahiri quoted in Pape, 2005: 122).<sup>39</sup>

In a relatively recent speech, Bin Laden also stated that:

Since the fall of the Caliphate, the Crusaders made sure not to enable the true Islam to establish a state.... I say that I am convinced that thanks to Allah, this nation has sufficient forces to establish the Islamic state and the Islamic Caliphate, but we must tell these forces that this is their obligation ("A New Bin Laden Speech," 2003).

It appears that Jihadis see the establishment of such a state and restoration of the Caliphate as a final solution. But a solution to what? The answer to this question is the key to an insightful analysis of Al Qaeda's motivations.

In fact, the answer is an aggregate outcome of different sources of the Jihadi frustration that are already discussed. Even in the first declaration against the Western world in 1996, Bin Laden gave a clue about their understanding of a "solution."

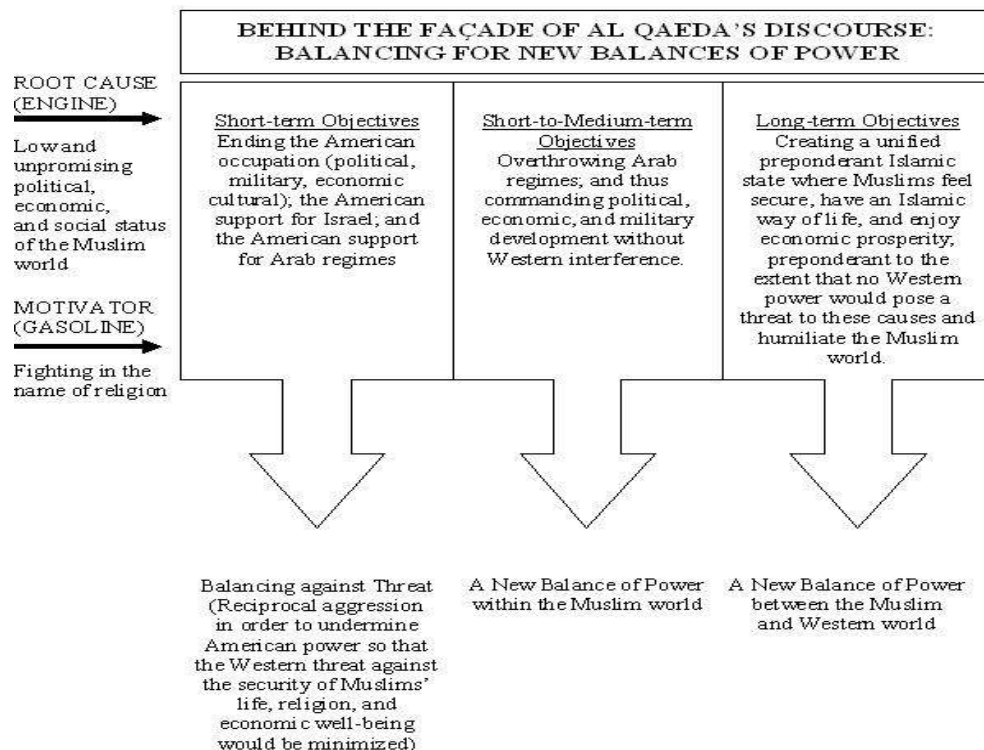
From here, today we begin the work, talking and discussing the ways of *correcting what had happened to the Islamic world* [emphasis added] in general, and the Land of the two Holy Places in particular. We wish to study the means that we could follow to *return the situation to its' normal path*

---

<sup>39</sup> For another clear expression of this intention from al-Zawahiri, see "Letter from al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi," 2005.

[emphasis added]. And to return to the people their own rights, particularly after the large damages and the great aggression on the life and the religion of the people (“Bin Laden’s Fatwa,” 1996).

On a close examination, it can be seen that the underlying theme of the discourse of Al Qaeda for years is “correcting”; correcting injustices against the Muslim world, correcting its suffering and oppression, correcting its poverty, and correcting their way of life. All in all, correcting the ever-decreasing political, economic and social status of the Islamic world is what Jihadis aim ultimately. In other words, they look for a new balance of power between the Western world and the Islamic nation. They look for a new distribution of power, as a result of which they could feel safe, have an Islamic way of life without Western intervention, enjoy economic prosperity, and thus end the humiliation of enduring years (see Figure 2).



**FIGURE 2. Balancing Discourse of Al Qaeda**



#### **4.7. A Political Act Spurred by Religious and Cultural Themes**

It seems that, in Jihadis' eyes, establishing a unified Islamic state is the ultimate way of "returning to the normal path" and creating a prideful and mighty alternate site of power. What is critical here is that, the balancing behavior of Al Qaeda and the resultant balance of power that it envisions are, like all other balancing movements, political in nature. True, Jihadis value a unified Islamic state because it would be a sanctuary where Muslims could practice "true Islam" under Sharia and have a completely different life vis-à-vis the "immoral" and "decadent" lifestyle of the Christian world. However, it appears that the overriding concern of establishing this Islamic state is elevating the political, military, social and economic status of the Muslim world so that not only religious but all kinds of injustices against Muslims would come to an end. In effect, it is this feeling of humiliation and insecurity that is the "engine" of Jihadis' fight against both the far and near enemies. For "gasoline", we need to look at how Bin Laden manipulates religion for his fight. In the following chapter, it will be argued that a particular reading of Islam and employing religious themes in the fight against the United States are one of the most effective methods of recruitment for Al Qaeda. For now, it would be fair to accept that Jihadis are surely fueled by what they view as an increasing violation of true Islam and a concentrated attack against their Islamic identities by the Zionist-Crusader alliance. Their anger is genuine more than anything else and deeply felt by not only Jihadis but also more moderate Islamists. However, despite periodic calls of Al Qaeda leaders for other nations to embrace Islam, the organization does not seem to promote this ideal

through violence. As far as religion is concerned, it takes the form of a defensive struggle, which is a part of the larger political movement.

Looking at the nature of the short-term objectives makes the political nature of Al Qaeda's balancing act even clearer. Several statements were given previously which show Al Qaeda's interest in political, economic and social issues besides religious ones. It is hard to believe that Al Qaeda has a political agenda almost comparable to a great power's. Putting an end to the American occupation in political, military, economic and cultural terms and to the American support to Israel and hitting American power to achieve these are highly political goals in nature (see also Nacos, 2003: 9-11; Mohamedou, 2007: 70-73). In other words, what Al Qaeda has been doing relates to who holds the power both among the Muslim world and in world politics generally. Al Qaeda's challenge is a reaction to correct – primarily – political power of Jihadis in particular and Muslims in general.

A recent quantitative study by Robert Pape (2005: 102-125) is noteworthy in substantiating my arguments discussed so far. Looking into 71 suicide bombers who conducted suicide attacks for Al Qaeda between 1995 and 2003, Pape found out that the presence of American military forces on the country of these bombers played a much more important role than religious fundamentalist concerns. Of these 71 suicide bombers, the nationality of 67 were known; and 43 of 67 bombers came from countries with American combat presence. Equally important, from the remaining 24, 19 bombers came from countries which were provided a considerable American military and economic aid. Statistically speaking, Pape (2005: 103-104) also found out that:

...al-Qaeda suicide terrorists are ten times more likely to come from Muslim countries where there is an American military presence for combat operations than from other Muslim countries.... Although Islamic fundamentalism mattered, the stationing of tens of thousands of American combat troops on the Arabian Peninsula from 1990 to 2001 probably made al-Qaeda suicide attacks against Americans...from ten to twenty times more likely.

Thus, Pape argues that:

Al-Qaeda is less a transnational network of like-minded ideologues brought together from across the globe via the Internet than a cross-national military alliance of national liberation movements working together against what they see as a common imperial threat. For al-Qaeda, religion matters, but mainly in the context of national resistance to foreign occupation (Pape, 2005: 104).

...its most lethal forces are best understood as a coalition of nationalist groups seeking to achieve a local change in their home countries, not as a truly transnational movement seeking to spread Islam or any other ideology to non-Islamic populations (Pape, 2005: 117).

Last but not least, several behaviors of Al Qaeda reveal how Jihadis are embedded into the politics of the state-centric world. Firstly, that a number of critical audiotapes and videos of Al Qaeda leaders were released just before elections in some Western countries, such as those in the United States and Spain, in an attempt to manipulate Western publics and have an impact on the results of the elections, certainly suggests something about the issue at hand (for some examples see Mohamedou, 2007: 58-59). Secondly, by offering truce to Europe in 2004, and to the United States in 2006, Al Qaeda made an attempt to engage in diplomacy, which is the primary conduct of politics between states (Mohamedou, 2007: 57-58). Thirdly, almost in the same way a nation-state makes strategic plans for decades ahead, Al Qaeda has implemented specifically designed strategies with clear purposes and has been far from being irrational in that sense. To give a brief example, by playing a key role in considerations of the United States about declaring war on Afghanistan and

Iraq, Jihadis initially became a part of the decision-making procedures of the United States. More importantly, by drawing the United States into these countries, Al Qaeda in a way drew it into its own playing ground; to the multi-centric world wherein rules and practices of the state-centric world remain inadequate for successful policy behaviors within the postinternational structure.

All in all, arguing that Al Qaeda wages a religious war against the United States does not appear to be correct by any stretch of the imagination. Al Qaeda is more than a mere religious terrorist group. Above everything else, Al Qaeda is an organization, which “made a rational choice to adopt terrorism as a shortcut to transforming the political landscape” (Bergen, 2006). Jihadis want to transform the political landscape because they are dissatisfied with it. They are dissatisfied with it because they are weak. They are weak because – in their eyes – they are disempowered by the strong. Therefore, the fight Al Qaeda started is a fight between the weak and the strong; the powerless and the powerful. It is a fight to balance against the strong. It is a balancing behavior to regain power at the expense of the strong. In a nutshell, just as other waves of terrorism were a power struggle in essence (see Cronin, 2002/03), “the driving forces of twenty-first-century terrorism are power and frustration, not the pursuit of religious principle” (Cronin, 2002/03: 55).

## CHAPTER V

### THE MECHANISMS OF AL QAEDA'S BALANCING AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF NSA BALANCING FOR THE UNITED STATES

*Enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America. Now, shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank. Terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies and to turn the power of modern technologies against us.*

*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,  
September 2002*

*Americans have known wars -- but for the past 136 years, they have been wars on foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941. Americans have known the casualties of war -- but not at the center of a great city on a peaceful morning. Americans have known surprise attacks -- but never before on thousands of civilians. All of this was brought upon us in a single day -- and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack.*

*President George W. Bush,  
Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,  
September 20, 2001<sup>40</sup>*

The previous chapter on the discourse of Al Qaeda showed more than anything else that Jihadis are willing to balance against American power. However,

---

<sup>40</sup> See "Address to a Joint Session," 2001.

Al Qaeda is one of the actors that are threatened by American power and thus willing to curtail it. What makes Jihadis worthy of further elaboration as a case study is their ability to act on their willingness. By complementing willingness with a set of different capabilities as well as perseverance and endurance, Al Qaeda proved to be balancing against the United States as much effectively as a rival state can do. The first section of this chapter addresses the question of how Al Qaeda could put its balancing discourse into practice. First, I will explore how the organization exploits information and communication technologies immensely. Second, I will concentrate on how Al Qaeda's organizational structure has evolved since its inception with a particular focus on the post-September 11 period. Third, I will address the question of asymmetric violence that Al Qaeda uses and why it is essential in the organization's balancing strategy. Fourth, I will explore how Jihadis build niches and flourish in the dark spots of the state-centric world such as weak or failed states. Finally, I will present a number of strategies that help Al Qaeda gain the support of particular constituencies and enlarge its recruitment pool.

Al Qaeda may have used a variety of tools to counterbalance the American threat. Still, anyone who views NSA balancing impossible may ask: So what? As argued in earlier chapters, one of the most commonly suggested reasons as to why NSAs can not balance is that they are weak and incapable, and they lack necessary military and material resources to sustain their balancing. The willingness of Al Qaeda and the mechanisms that it employs, the argument may run, should not necessarily lead us to believe that Jihadis are really balancing against the United States. Therefore, the second part of this chapter seeks to provide a preliminary

answer to the “so what?” question by exploring the tangible effects of Jihadi balancing on the United States. It will be argued that Al Qaeda’s balancing had a profound impact – both directly and indirectly – on American security culture and practices, American hard power, American soft power, and on anti-hegemonic behaviors among rivals of the United States. The crux of the matter here is that collective outcome of these appear to be largely contributing to recent changes in the global distribution of power. Al Qaeda’s balancing, in other words, has made it clear that NSAs are no longer incapable of having a role in power distribution considerations.

It should also be noted that this chapter will provide only preliminary evidence about the tangible impact of Al Qaeda on American power. Further research is needed, especially a comparative analysis of the impact of major state balancing and VNSA balancing on the United States that relies primarily on quantitative data. Despite this limitation, an important conclusion can be drawn from the preliminary findings in this chapter: It appears that Al Qaeda’s balancing against the United States has created a similar impact of state balancing more quickly, more cheaply, and under the pressure of a relentless and determined hunt down campaign for years.

## **5.1. The Mechanisms of Al Qaeda’s Balancing**

### **5.1.1. Exploiting Information and Communication Technologies**

Exploiting revolutionary developments in information and communications technologies is a major balancing tool of Al Qaeda against the United States. It would not be wrong to argue that without technological developments that have transformed

almost every aspect of our lives, no VNSA would ever develop a potential to balance against great powers. This is indeed what “technology’s paradox” is about; it “can be used for both good and bad ends” (Robb, 2007: 9). The same technology used in pharmaceutical development can be perverted to produce biological and chemical weapons; and as far as information and communication technologies is concerned, the same technology connecting friends kilometers apart via facebook can be used to organize catastrophic terrorist attacks claiming thousands of lives. In short, technology empowers individuals; yet it empowers not only good but also bad individuals.

Al Qaeda is surely not the first VNSA exploiting information and communication channels. In previous decades, terrorists made use of different channels ranging from radio stations to newspapers and flyers and to television. (Hoffman, 2006: 199). However, most of these had “either inherent technical and geographical constraints that inhibited reception and restricted the listening audience or publication problems that made mass production and wide distribution difficult, if not impossible” (Hoffman, 2006: 199-200). The introduction of particularly three information and communication channels marked a watershed in terrorists’ overall capabilities: “the Internet”, “affordable if not extraordinarily cheap, video production and duplication processes”, and “private, terrorist-owned television stations” (Hoffman, 2006: 201). In other words, traditional communication channels took a completely new form with technological developments. How this contributed to the balancing capabilities of VNSAs such as Al Qaeda rests on three inherent dimensions



that can be found in the nature of these channels; they are low-cost, quick/timely, and they have a vast geographical reach (Hoffman, 2006: 201-202; Weimann, 2006: 624).

Since its inception, Al Qaeda has used these information and communication channels in mainly three ways: internal communication (networking and soul-searching), external communication (propagating its cause and enlarging its recruitment pool), and maintenance of operational capability (offering online training and mounting operations).

#### **5.1.1.1. Internal Communication**

Above everything else, the Internet is a major tool for Al Qaeda to network. Especially after Jihadis lost their territorial bases in the wake of the September 11 attacks, the Internet became the foremost instrument to stay connected in the face of a constant American hunt. In the words of Hoffman (2006: 214):

“For al Qaeda, the Internet therefore has become something of a *virtual sanctuary* [emphasis added], providing an effective, expeditious, and anonymous means through which the movement can continue to communicate with its fighters, followers, sympathizers, and supporters worldwide.”

The term virtual sanctuary perfectly illustrates the Internet’s role in the balancing attempt of Al Qaeda. Just as terrorist groups exploit geographical sanctuaries to build a niche (and develop negative entropy in these niches by indoctrinating and training a large pool of recruits) and thus ensure their survival, Al-Qaeda uses the Internet as a virtual sanctuary, which in turn helps Jihadis create a virtual niche (in which they build up negative entropy by connecting with each other and carrying out some functions of the organization via cyber space despite Washington’s ferocious response), and sustain the organization’s survival. More clearly, the Internet has a

crucial role in sustainability/endurance of Al Qaeda's actorness and balancing potential because it provides a steady communication among Jihadis and thereby helps them preserve the organization's mode of operation. Unlike some terrorist movements of earlier ages which simply died out when members lost track of each other, Al Qaeda members managed to stay connected and sustain most if not all of the functions of the organization. What is more, "the Internet connects not only members of the same terrorist organizations but also members of different groups" (Weimann, 2006: 636). Therefore, Al Qaeda is also able to stay connected with like-minded groups and individuals. The organization's and its affiliated groups' presence on the Internet has grown to the extent that even someone who is not an Al Qaeda member but has sympathy towards the group can reach Jihadis within a couple of minutes surfing on the net (Kohlmann, 2006: 121-122).

Especially through the Internet, Jihadis also have in-group debates and discussions about their movement's means and ends. They post statements, comments, and communiqués on websites and have lengthy discussions on these on different Internet forums. The wide array of issues highly debated by Jihadis in cyberspace includes the legitimacy of violence against civilians and Muslims, relations with other terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas, and continuing the struggle within a democratic (parliamentary and electoral) framework (Weimann, 2006). Although no empirical evidence exists because of the nature of the issue, such discussions may have a role in strengthening the loyalty of Jihadis at the grass-roots level to the overall causes of the movement.

#### **5.1.1.2. External Communication**

Al Qaeda also uses information and communication channels as a means of propaganda. Through the Internet, satellite TV stations, and their own video footage companies, Jihadis relay their message to their target audience (see Bergen, Schuster, Nasr, & Eedle, 2005: 116). Their primary target audience is the Muslim world in general, and Muslims sympathetic to the Jihadi causes in particular. Beyond simply letting others know their cause, Al Qaeda aims at attracting others to join Jihad. With this aim in mind, Jihadis frequently lay stress on a number of issues. For instance, a common message prevailing in Jihadi websites is that “the West is implacably hostile to Islam” (Hoffman, 2006: 215) and displays this hostility through aggression and violence against the Muslim world (Ryan, 2007: 995-998). Indeed, with this message, Jihadis engage in, what was referred to in Chapter III as, identity entrepreneurship. By uniting Muslims around a strong sense of us vs. them distinction, they enlarge their pool of recruitment and thus build up further negative entropy (which in turn contributes to the sustainability of Al Qaeda’s balancing behavior). In order to facilitate this process, Jihadis frequently refer to how Muslims are victimized by the Western world in Iraq, Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia and so forth (Hoffman, 2006: 221). Another underlying message in Jihadi websites is that a reciprocal violent response is the only way to stop Muslim sufferings (Hoffman, 2006: 215). This is surely an attempt of justifying their violence to their constituency.

Al Qaeda’s external communication strategy is not restricted to theoretical justifications of their fight against the West. Another step in their online recruitment policy is offering potential recruits practical tips on what to do before joining the

movement. For example, a 2002 posting on a radical Islamist site, [www.azzam.com](http://www.azzam.com), “provided these would-be recruits with useful practical travel information on how to unobtrusively leave one’s job and how to avoid arousing suspicion from employers, diplomats issuing visas, and inquisitive border and immigration officials” (Hoffman, 2006: 213).

Putting their interest in recruitment aside, Jihadis use external communication channels as a psychological propaganda tool as well. First, this psychological propaganda targets both Jihadis and would-be recruits. Especially through video footages and audio clips as well as satellite TV stations, Al Qaeda leadership cadre acts as a motivation coach at the grass-roots level. For instance, with appearances on TV stations such as al Jazeera, Bin Laden is able to directly communicate with the Muslim world and relay his message however he wants. By emphasizing how the organization does extremely well in its struggle and how they are likely to prevail over the enemy, he provides the “moral boost” needed for the cohesiveness and maintenance of the organization (Bergen et al., 2005: 117). The impact of this moral boost has been further multiplied given that Bin Laden is considered to be an eloquent orator (Bergen et al., 2005: 122, 132). As a matter of fact, the mere presence of Bin Laden during the most intense period of Washington’s hunt down campaign provided a great deal of moral support to Jihadis worldwide. By means of video appearances, Bin Laden not only showed that – although the only superpower was chasing him 24/7 – he was alive and well but also continued his threats against the Western world under adverse circumstances (Hill, 2006: 37-38).

The latter point brings us to the second target of Al Qaeda's psychological propaganda via external communication channels: the Western public. For one thing, even before forging close ties with Arab media stations such as al Jazeera, Bin Laden frequently appeared in the Western media (e.g. via interviews with CNN) (Bergen et al., 2005: 115). These appearances included open threats of Jihadis against the United States. However, the psychological impact that they created became obvious most notably after the September 11 attacks. Since 2001, both Bin Laden and his lieutenants such as al-Zawahiri and al-Zarqawi had a wide exposure in prominent Western media establishments and emphasized their willingness to damage the United States to the fullest extent possible. Simply put, these appearances "have served as a repeated reminder to Western audiences of the threat Bin Laden and Al Qaeda continue to present to their lives" (Hill, 2006: 40). Bin Laden's "ability to appear and disappear as he chooses" (Hill, 2006: 40) created a considerable degree of pressure and distress for both the American public and state and security officials. This pressure, stemming from an incapability of stopping Al Qaeda leaders from publicly talking, has further distorted sound decision-making making processes in Washington, and thus contributed to the asymmetric warfare waged by Jihadis by forcing Americans into impulsive and emotional reactions in the war on terror.

#### **5.1.1.3. Maintenance of Operational Capability**

Information and communication channels have also helped Al Qaeda sustain its indispensable balancing method, the use of violence. Especially after losing its most important territorial bases such as Afghanistan, where they could provide

Jihadis the necessary training for mounting attacks, the Internet proved to be a cyber training space for Al Qaeda (Borum and Gelles, 2005: 480). Today Jihadi websites are replete with practical information on how to manufacture certain weapons and use them most appropriately (Stern, 2003: 34; Cronin, 2002/03: 48). It is reported that, as of 2006, Al Qaeda had “published more than 10,000 pages of written training material...and more than 100 training videos...” (Venzke and Ibrahim quoted in Jones, 2006: 565). Al Qaeda networks take advantage of this vast material in overcoming certain operational difficulties.

The September 11 attacks perfectly illustrate Jihadis’ reliance on the Internet in planning such disastrous attacks. As Weimann (2004: 10) puts in detail:

Thousands of encrypted messages that had been posted in a password-protected area of a website were found by federal officials on the computer of arrested al Qaeda terrorist Abu Zubaydah, who reportedly masterminded the September 11 attacks. The first messages found on Zubaydah’s computer were dated May 2001 and the last were sent on September 9, 2001. The frequency of the messages was highest in August 2001. To preserve their anonymity, the al Qaeda terrorists used the Internet in public places and sent messages via public e-mail. Some of the September 11 hijackers communicated using free web-based e-mail accounts.

Another patent example was seen in 2003 Casablanca bombings, which were carried out by an Al-Qaeda affiliate, Salafia Jihadia. Upon understanding that the bombs that were to be used in those attacks were inadequate, Jihadis built a better developed bomb themselves by means of the information and technical know-how provided online (Sageman quoted in Jones, 2006: 565).

Arguably one of the most critical contributions of the Internet in balancing potential of Al Qaeda is that it widens the cohort which can carry out violent attacks against the United States and its allies. More clearly, technology has empowered

individuals to such an extent that a group of would-be recruits, or inexperienced members of Al Qaeda, reached a capability threshold of carrying out violent attacks within a very short time span and – most of the time – without the need of physical contact. In other words, the Internet has provided a self-organization opportunity for small group of committed individuals (Atran, 2006: 293). Surely attacks organized purely over the Internet are likely to be small-scale ones with limited impact. However, if Al Qaeda manages to conduct even small-scale attacks regularly, both material and psychological consequences of these on Americans would tip the scales in favor of Al Qaeda in its fight against the United States.

### **5.1.2. Organizational Evolution**

#### **5.1.2.1. Pre-9/11 Period**

##### **5.1.2.1.1. Early Organizational Structure**

In the early years of its inception, during which Jihadis' main focus was to fight Soviets in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda was organized as a hierarchical terrorist group (Mishal and Rosenthal, 2005: 277). Its organizational structure consisted of three main layers. At the top was Bin Laden as Emir-General, in charge of the overall development of the organization. The second layer was Shura Majlis which was comprised of Bin Laden's closest lieutenants such as al-Zawahiri. Below these key leaders and decision-makers were four different committees: military committee, religious/legal committee, finance committee, and media committee (Borum and

Gelles, 2005: 474-475). In short, “each unit was subordinated in a pyramid-like structure to the organization’s leadership, headed by bin Laden” (Mishal and Rosenthal, 2005: 277). As a corollary, in its early years, Al Qaeda carried almost all major characteristics of the hierarchical mode of organization, some of which are “a strict division of labor, a high level of specialization, and top-to-bottom subordination that hardly allows for ambiguity in the process of action and coordination between different units involved in the activity” (Samuel quoted in Mishal and Rosenthal, 2005: 278).

#### **5.1.2.1.2. Gradual Transition to a Network Structure**

Especially starting from the mid-1990s, Al Qaeda began transforming into a network structure. What largely accounts for this transformation is the development of Al Qaeda’s initial motives into a much larger set of goals. As Al Qaeda began to embrace global causes after Soviets’ withdrawal from Afghanistan (e.g. fighting the West to put a halt to Muslim sufferings worldwide), it accompanied this ideational evolution with an organizational one by gradually transforming from a strict hierarchical mode of organization into a more flexible and decentralized network system (Spyer, 2004: 31; Mishal and Rosenthal, 2005: 278). On the one hand, Al Qaeda cells dispersed over many countries. These cells were supported by safehouses and training camps in not only Afghanistan but also Sudan, Pakistan and Yemen (Spyer, 2004: 31). In other words, a number of countries proved to be operational bases for Al Qaeda (Mishal and Rosenthal, 2005: 279). On the other hand, Al Qaeda began to forge closer and more formal links with likeminded terrorist groups. For



instance, some Egyptian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups became affiliated with the World Islamic Front that Bin Laden established in 1998 (Stern quoted in Mishal and Rosenthal, 2005: 279).

How this transformation into a network system functioned and paid dividends for Al Qaeda can be clearly observed in its most disastrous September 11 attacks. During the planning and organizing process prior to the attacks, terrorists from different Muslim communities were trained in Afghanistan and later received logistical support from Al Qaeda cells in Europe and Southeast Asia (Mishal and Rosenthal, 2005: 279).

#### **5.1.2.2. Post 9/11 Period**

United States' immediate response to the September 11 attacks had surely a debilitating impact on Al Qaeda. Not only it lost its main territorial headquarter but also most of its leadership cadre was killed or captured. The American retaliation, thus, shaped Al Qaeda's mode of organization in the wake of the September 11 attacks.

##### **5.1.2.2.1. Decentralization of the Chain of Command**

One of the foremost adaptation of Al Qaeda in the post 9/11 period was further improving its network system. Now that key leaders of the organization were busy with protecting their own life, earlier top-down decision making approach had to be dropped. Therefore cell and field leaders were given much more responsibility in

the overall direction of the movement at the operational and tactical levels (Borum and Gelles, 2005: 476).

A corollary of such decentralization has been an enlarged space for individual innovation and creativeness. Members no longer interact within a strict top-down and pre-established framework during planning and organizing attacks. They can thereby “have more freedom to experiment locally with their own ideas” (Jones, 2006: 561). In other words, Al Qaeda has embraced a *think global, act local* approach in its organizational mode of behavior. Practical reflection of this approach was observed in attacks since 2001, such as those in Madrid, Mombasa, Riyadh, Bali and London which were characterized by “increased local initiative and experimentation, with attackers adapting to local conditions more readily” (Jones, 2006: 561). This transformation was of existential importance for Al Qaeda to continue its balancing against the United States. Since violence lies at the core of its balancing potential, and since it is extremely difficult for Al Qaeda leaders to maintain the level of violence during a determined American hunt down campaign within its earlier hierarchical mode of operation, decentralization of the chain of command helped Al Qaeda sustain its operational activities. This, in turn, contributed to the sustainability of both Al Qaeda as an organization and its balancing potential. In a nutshell, this organizational evolution proved that Al Qaeda is a quick learner. It has displayed a remarkable ability to adapt to the changing environment.

This decentralization issue also addresses the question of Bin Laden’s importance for Al Qaeda’s continuance. Within the overall loosening of the chain of command, what “leadership” denotes in Al Qaeda’s organizational structure has

altered since 2001 as well. Until the post-9/11 period, despite a gradual transition to the network system, Bin Laden and Shura Majlis had a key role in tactical and operational steering of the movement. They were the ultimate authorities that made final organizational decisions (see Jacquard, 2002: 106-107). In the aftermath of the Afghan War, their leadership turned out to be “more inspirational than instrumental” (Borum and Gelles, 2005: 476). Bin Laden is no longer in the utter control of Al Qaeda; indeed he is even believed to be “largely peripheral” by most of the intelligence community (Burke, 2004: 19). However, that he is alive and still continues the Jihadi struggle despite all adversities inspires not only Al Qaeda members but also would-be Jihadis. Not only more Muslims join the movement but also current Jihadis have a moral encouragement to sustain their fight. That is why Bin Laden’s inspirational leadership adds to the balancing power of Al Qaeda as much as, if not more than, his instrumental leadership does.<sup>41</sup>

What is perhaps more important is that even Bin Laden’s capture or death may not undermine Al Qaeda’s balancing potential. He is already a hero in the eyes of thousands of Jihadis, and it is highly likely that his death will be seen as a sacrifice on the path of Jihad and he will be elevated to the martyrdom status. It is highly possible then that his martyrdom will be another source of inspiration (Burke, 2004: 19). Hill (2006: 44) insightfully observes that:

...above all Bin Laden is recognised by his admirers and followers as a spiritual figure – and as such a figure who can be said to possess a

---

<sup>41</sup> The Madrid bombings of 2004 is an appropriate example of the impact of inspirational leadership. As Corera (2004) emphasized: “The group who carried out the Madrid bombing in March 2004 were not people who had been selected, trained and were carrying out direct orders from Osama Bin Laden in the way the 9/11 hijackers had. None of them appear to have been to Afghanistan. Instead, they were inspired by al-Qaeda and its rhetoric and statements but seem to have operated as part of a relatively autonomous grouping of European cells.

*transcendental relationship to space and time* [emphasis added]. In these terms the caging or killing of Bin Laden may do little to reduce his status amongst his followers, only conferring on him the honour of martyrdom. Conceived in such a way *Bin Laden is uncaptureable and unkillable* [emphasis added] - ...

In short, given Bin Laden's importance for Al Qaeda, it should not be concluded that his death will definitely put an end to the Jihadi movement. What Bin Laden has preached and achieved for years has almost turned into a source of negative entropy on its own. He himself declared that he would love to die in his struggle ("Transcript of Osama Bin Ladin Interview," 1997). Therefore, his death could turn out to set an example for Jihadis about the dedication they have to put into Jihad and consequently inflame the Jihadi movement.

#### **5.1.2.2.2. From Al Qaeda to Al Qaedas**

Since the early 2000s, Al Qaeda has deeply enlarged its associations with likeminded terrorist groups all over the globe. Most of these associations are based on a symbiotic relationship. Al Qaeda provides financial, material, logistical, and ideological support to local terrorist groups that are willing to cooperate (Hoffman, 2007: 46).<sup>42</sup> In return, these groups affiliate themselves with Al Qaeda by pledging allegiance to Bin Laden, and help the organization sustain some of its traditional functions, the most important of which is mounting violent attacks on the United States and its Western allies (Riedel, 2007). It would not be an overstatement to argue that Al Qaeda handed over, or had to hand over, this responsibility largely to its

---

<sup>42</sup> The geographical extent of Al Qaeda-affiliated terrorist groups is staggering. Al Qaeda is most noticeably involved in regions such as Central Asia, Southeast Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkans, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. For a list of Al Qaeda-affiliated groups in these regions, see Hoffman, 2007: 46; Spyer, 2004: 33; Borum and Gelles, 2005: 477.

associate groups. Most of its attacks in the immediate post-9/11 period were conducted by Al Qaeda-affiliated groups rather than directly by Al Qaeda itself (Gunaratna, 2004b: 93).<sup>43</sup>

However, Al Qaeda's spread over a variety of regions goes beyond its formal links with other terrorist organizations. Many individuals that have no established links with it but somehow affiliate themselves with the organization's causes are inspired by the group and organize attacks on their own, with no guidance of Al Qaeda (Hoffman, 2007: 48).<sup>44</sup> In other words, Al Qaeda's transnational discourse aimed at manipulating Muslims' rage against the Western world and its relative success in undermining American power has been influential such that not only local terrorist groups worldwide but also disparate groups of people try to emulate the organization, contributing to what can be termed as a *copycat phenomenon*. There are now so many Al-Qaeda-affiliated actors (both associate terrorist groups as well as informal groups of individuals) that it appears as if Al Qaeda is replicating itself. That is why Hoffman (2004: 552) suggests that "today there are many Al Qaedas rather than the single Al Qaeda of the past". Accordingly, today it is possible to speak of Al Qaedas, rather than Al Qaeda, balancing against the United States. This copycat phenomenon is another source of negative entropy for the organization. Even if Al Qaeda cannot carry out violent attacks against the United States for a long time

---

<sup>43</sup> Mishal and Rosenthal (2005: 280-281) offer two specific examples of this symbiotic relationship between Al Qaeda and its affiliates, showing how each side perform their responsibilities. Both Ansar al Islam, an Iraqi terrorist group having largely local purposes, and Jemaah Islamiyah, a Southeast Asian terrorist group received military and financial support from Al Qaeda. In return, they served Al Qaeda by conducting attacks against the organization's enemies, the former in the Middle East and the latter in Southeast Asia. Jemaah Islamiyah, for instance, was behind one of the most violent attacks of Jihadis in the post-9/11 period, 2002 Bali bombings (Riedel, 2007: 112). For similar examples of this symbiotic relationship in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Algeria, see Riedel, 2007.

<sup>44</sup> One example that Hoffman (2007: 48) offers is the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in 2004 by a member of a small group called Hofstad Group.

period, it is highly likely that other Al Qaedas will. Thereby, not only Al Qaeda will be continuing at chipping away the overall strength of Washington but also it will remain hitting the headlines and thus being reckoned with as an influential actor by others. In short, copycat phenomenon sustains Al Qaeda's actorness as well as its balancing capability against the United States.

It should finally be noted that both decentralization of the chain of command and increased alliances with likeminded groups have complicated American counter-terrorism efforts. It was suggested in Chapter III that if a VNSA is not dependant on a fixed territory for its survival, it is less likely to fear from retaliation since the attacked state will never be sure where to find and target the members of that VNSA. Al Qaeda's balancing act and the American response perfectly illustrate this point in the sense that decentralized and deterritorial nature of Al Qaeda has made it a more difficult actor to deal with (Record, 2005: 36).

#### **5.1.2.2.3. From Al Qaeda Network to Al Qaedaism**

In light of all these discussions above, it can be concluded that Al Qaeda is more than a terrorist organization now. True, its transformation into a decentralized, ahierarchical network with affiliated groups worldwide has had an enormous impact for its actorness and balancing attempt. Yet, even beyond this transformation, Al Qaeda has turned into "an idea or a concept" (Hoffman, 2004: 552); into "an ideological movement" (Borum and Gelles, 2005: 472; see also Gunaratna, 2004: 530 and Stern, 2003) which may be termed as "Al Qaedaism" (Burke, 2004). This ideational formation has clear-cut objectives with a broad and appealing discourse,

through which it draws outraged Muslims together. Thereby evolving into this formation casts considerable light on the gravity of Al Qaeda's balancing against the United States. However it is difficult and prolonged, there is usually if not always a way to overcome different modes of organization (Hoffman, 2004: 552) as well as certain tactical forces (Borum and Gelles, 2005: 473-474). But, it takes more to prevail over ideational formations and signs of faltering that Washington has shown to date exemplify this point (Borum and Gelles, 2005: 474).

### **5.1.3. The Use of Asymmetric Violence**

As mentioned several times in this thesis, the use of violence is the life blood of Al Qaeda's balancing against the United States. Al Qaeda has a number of political goals and its scheme for meeting those rests on the use of violence (Spyer, 2004: 34). Typical to most, if not all, terrorist organizations, Al Qaeda resorts to asymmetric warfare tactics rather than confronting the enemy through conventional military strategies. It is this type of warfare that significantly accounts for why Al-Qaeda type NSAs have the potential of balancing against major states in general and why Al Qaeda has had a relative success in its balancing in particular.

Asymmetric warfare plays into VNSAs' hands because it necessitates that states move from the state-centric world to the multi-centric one. Military assets and strategies designed for inter-state conflicts usually fall short of achieving victory over VNSAs which try to negate states' traditional capabilities by means of asymmetric strategies and attacks. In doing so, VNSAs take advantage of their non-state actorness in the multi-centric world since they are not bound by most of the rules and norms of

the state-centric world. With respect to the use of force, for example, VNSAs are under no legal obligation to act within the boundaries of the laws and customs of war set out in many international conventions. From the perspective of states, in other words, VNSAs play dirty. They usually make no difference between military personnel and civilians in their attacks. By carrying out disastrous attacks directed at civilians, they create fear and panic both at the societal and governmental level. Trying to avoid direct military confrontation, they carry out hit-and-run raids. They draw states into difficult terrains to render conventional military assets of states ineffective. All these tactics confront states with a different world in which they have to deal with different actors in different means. In a nutshell, thorough asymmetric warfare, VNSAs have the opportunity to inflict considerable economic, political and psychological damage to states in a very cost-effective way. Therefore, resort to asymmetric warfare tactics represents the multidimensional nature of power in postinternational politics. It certainly has a place in discussions as to which actor is capable and powerful enough to balance. Turning a blind eye to the impact of asymmetric warfare leaves any answer misleading in these discussions.

Since its inception, Al Qaeda and affiliated groups have unleashed extreme violence on the United States and its allies in an asymmetric manner. Some of the major attacks that Al Qaeda is reported to have borne direct or indirect responsibility are: 1993 World Trade Center bombing in the United States, 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia, 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, 2000 Rizal Day bombings in the Philippines, 2000 USS Cole bombing in Yemen, 2001 September 11 attacks in the United States, 2002 Ghriba Synagogue bombing in



Tunisia, 2002 Bali bombings in Indonesia, 2002 Mombasa bombing in Kenya, 2002 Karachi bombing in Pakistan, 2002 U.S. Consulate bombing in Pakistan, 2003 Riyadh bombings in Saudi Arabia, 2003 Casablanca bombings in Morocco, 2003 Istanbul Bombings in Turkey, 2004 Madrid bombings in Spain, 2005 London bombings in the United Kingdom, 2005 Bali bombings in Indonesia, 2005 Amman bombings in Jordan, and 2007 Algiers bombings in Algeria (see <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9126/#8>; <http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/033104.pdf>). In addition to these, Al Qaeda in Iraq is believed to have been responsible for an important portion of deadly suicide bombings since President Bush declared the end of the Iraq War.

Such disastrous asymmetric attacks are indeed outcomes of a rational and calculated decision-making process of Jihadi leaders. Al Qaeda struck the World Trade Center (WTC) in New York City in 2001. Yet, WTC was only the façade of what Bin Laden and his lieutenants had in mind. It would be too naïve to assume that Bin Laden did not expect a determined and aggressive response to these attacks. In fact, this was exactly what Bin Laden wished for. With Washington outrageously and impulsively reacting, thereby turning a deaf ear to what international community says, and rejecting to abide by the rules of the state-centric world (e.g. using disproportionate force against civilians and being involved in flagrant human rights abuses), Jihadis would once again portray Americans as an evil monster trampling on the lives of innocent Muslims (Doran, 2001: 31-32; see also Mohamedou, 2007: 63-64 and Friedman, 2003: 37). This would in turn facilitate Al Qaeda's identity entrepreneurship in the Middle East. Jihadi leaders would be able to create cleavages

between governments that support Washington and their societies, undermine the latter's confidence in the former, and thus get the support of a large constituency across the region (Doran, 2001: 32). This line of reasoning was a part of Al Qaeda's asymmetric violence strategy then; and the very same calculations hold true for Washington's Iraq War today.

What is more, Al Qaeda's asymmetric violence strategy has been evolving since the onset of the war on terror. Due to the intensity and forcefulness of Washington's hunt down campaign, the organization made three key changes in its asymmetric warfare in recent years. First, there has been a shift from hard to soft targets (Hoffman, 2004: 551; Gunaratna, 2004: 527; Borum and Gelles, 2005: 478). Al Qaeda began concentrating its efforts more on largely populated and relatively vulnerable areas such as "hotels and banks; religious targets; and population centers" (Gunaratna, 2004: 527).<sup>45</sup> Second, there has been a shift from large-scale to small-scale attacks (Spyer, 2004: 33). Although Al Qaeda did not carry out an attack of September 11 type and extent in recent years, it has sustained its operational activity by more frequent small-scale attacks. The principal reason for this shift is that September 11-type attacks require much more time, personnel and sophistication; all of which are less available for Al Qaeda during Washington's hunt down campaign (Spyer, 2004: 33). Third, as previously mentioned, there has been a shift from Al Qaeda to its affiliated and associate groups in initiating attacks (Gunaratna, 2004b: 93; Spyer, 2004: 33). This operational evolution is another pertinent example of how Al Qaeda – as an organic NSA – learns. When confronted with adverse conditions, it has shown a clever adaptability potential. Despite the onset of a determined American

---

<sup>45</sup> For examples of attacks showing this shift, see Hoffman, 2004: 551.

pursuit, Jihadis managed to sustain their violent attacks. This, in turn, ensured their survival and strengthened Al Qaeda's actorness and balancing power.

An additional dimension of asymmetric warfare, which is largely employed by Iraqi insurgent groups including Al Qaeda in Iraq against the United States has been what may be termed "*systems disruption*" (Robb, 2007: 5). With this strategy, Iraqi insurgents conduct attacks on infrastructural systems in Iraq in order to undermine the new government, portray it as a weak authority that is incapable of providing the basic services to Iraqi citizens such as water and electricity, and thus undermine citizens' confidence and loyalty in the state (Robb, 2007: 5, 35). Their attacks on oil, gas, electricity, water, and transportation systems have had an enormously adverse impact for reconstruction efforts in Iraq (Robb, 2007: 53-54). As pointed out by Robb (2007, 2007: 6), the gravity of this asymmetric challenge is exacerbated when the cost-benefit analysis steps in: "one small attack on an oil pipeline in southeast Iraq , conducted for an estimated \$2,000, cost the Iraqi government more than \$500 million in lost oil revenues. That is a return on investment of 25 million percent." <sup>46</sup>

Putting asymmetric violence tactics aside, it is widely reported that Al Qaeda and affiliated groups have long been in search of unconventional weapons such as nuclear, biological, chemical, and radiological weapons. As a matter of fact, in the judgment of Bin Laden, acquiring such weapons is a part of their religious duty (Mendelsohn, 2005: 64; Allison, 2006: 37; Spyer, 2004: 38). If one is to make a

---

<sup>46</sup> Robb (2007: 51) argues that insurgency in Iraq can by no means be narrowed down to Al Qaeda in Iraq's activities and that Al Qaeda plays only a minor role in overall insurgency movement in Iraq. However, when one considers both close links between Al Qaeda in Iraq and various insurgents movements in Iraq and Al Qaeda's inspirational impact on these insurgents, it would not be wrong to argue that Al Qaeda is both directly and indirectly involved in systems disruption in Iraq.

comment on Al Qaeda and weapons of mass destruction today, the starting point should be that Jihadis have every desire to acquire unconventional weapons of different types. This desire became clear in many incidences in which Al Qaeda members were reported to have attempted using some of these weapons (for examples, see Spyer, 2004).

Beyond the willingness to acquire these weapons, there appears to be two contentious issues with respect to the use of WMD; whether NSAs can ever acquire such weapons, and whether they would be willing to use them even after acquisition. As to the former question, the argument that acquiring WMD is not straightforward and NSAs are likely to confront many technical problems in manufacturing, transportation, storage or delivery of weapons (O'Neill, 2003; Spyer, 2004: 37) have indeed some truth. What is more, the most effective of WMD, nuclear weapons, are the most difficult to manufacture since they require sophisticated technical know-how and scarcer materials for their production (O'Neil, 2003: 101-102). However, although this analysis holds true for today, it is highly likely to erode in the foreseeable future. As argued many times in this study, what lies at the core of postinternational politics is an endless and rapid increase in individual skills. Such analyses consider scenarios of an NSA either producing nuclear weapons or getting them from state actors as highly unimaginable. Yet what they fail to see is that the American proverb "where there is a will, there is a way" could not be realized more in postinternational politics that we live in today than any era throughout the history. With increasing skills at the micro level – coupled with continuous macro changes (e.g. further transcendence of boundaries) – NSAs can very soon overcome technical

difficulties in fabricating, acquiring and using nuclear weapons. What is more, nuclear weapons put aside, it is believed that biological, chemical and radiological weapons are easier to fabricate since their required ingredients are conveniently available (O'Neill, 2003: 102). Given that these weapons have vast physical and psychological impact potential as well (see O'Neill, 2003: 103), Al Qaeda's acquisition and successful use of them could have disastrous consequences for the United States. As far as the second question is concerned, whether Al Qaeda would be willing to use these weapons, there are two issues involved; moral and strategic. For the former, it can be argued that Al Qaeda leadership's rage is so intense that they would not hesitate using WMD for moral reasons if these weapons serve their interests at some measure. Mendelsohn (2005: 65) insightfully observes that:

Al Qaeda's view of the conflict and the evident belief that the sanctity of the objectives justifies any means indicate that Al Qaeda rejects the moral foundations of the WMD taboo. The network's bloody track record only reinforces this conclusion. Bin Laden's attitude toward the death of Muslims during attacks on US targets demonstrates that he values fighting the US over human life.

For the latter, there is an argument that conventional weapons serve Al Qaeda's interests more than WMD do since Al Qaeda is not very likely to achieve mass casualties by WMD due to the sophisticated nature and technical complexities of these unconventional weapons (Spyer, 2004). Once again, although this argument partially holds true today, NSAs are approaching the threshold of acquiring WMD and carrying out destructive attacks day by day as individuals are becoming more and more skillful. Moreover, as long as there is no guarantee that a nuclear state will not give necessary materials or directly fully functioning WMD to Jihadis, one can never be sure of a limited or unsuccessful attempt of them using WMD. The strategic

dimension becomes further blurred if one considers the organizational structure of Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda has transformed into a decentralized network system connected to a large web of likeminded terrorist groups all over the globe. This type of organizational mode, in turn, brings about “an overall loss of control over affiliated organizations” (Mishal and Rosenthal, 2004: 289). Therefore, even Al Qaeda leadership gives up WMD for strategic reasons, other Al Qaedas may not.

All in all, Graham Allison’s answer to the question of when terrorists could launch the first nuclear attack gives us a clue about the gravity of the WMD question. Allison (2006: 38-39) argues that:

If terrorists bought or stole a nuclear weapon in good working condition, they could explode it today. If the weapon had a lock, the date of detonation would be delayed for several days. If terrorists acquired the 45 kilograms of HEU (highly enriched uranium) [abbreviation added] needed for an elementary nuclear bomb, they could have a working bomb in less than a year.

In short, in addition to more traditional asymmetric tactics, Al Qaeda is likely to strengthen its balancing capability with WMD types. Even a declaration from Al Qaeda that it has fully functioning and ready-to-use nuclear weapons would have a profound psychological impact for the United States; and if it carries out a successful nuclear attack, economic, political and social consequences would severely undermine American power. Above all, O’Neill (2003: 108) beautifully brainstorms what a WMD attack would mean for America’s role in world politics; that is, American hegemony in the state-centric world:

...Yet, it is far less certain whether the United States would be able to cope with a massive WMD strike against a key urban centre such as Los Angeles, with fatalities ranging in the tens of thousands. Would the US public be willing to maintain its support for America’s global strategic commitments following such an attack? The US public may well conclude that the benefits flowing from American global hegemony are far outweighed by the costs of

being a terrorist target. In this scenario, it is certainly conceivable that public pressure for the United States to return to its pre-1941 isolationist policy would be too intense for any administration to resist.

To conclude, through asymmetric violence fueled with an exploitation of non-statist assets and capabilities, Al Qaeda has not only inflicted considerable damage to Washington but also further undermined its power by pulling Americans into the multi-centric world. The United States has confronted numerous pitfalls in its war against Al Qaeda since this was not a classic interstate war waged only within the state-centric world. What is more, Al Qaeda has sustained its operational activity more cheaply than a state can do. Its major strike, the September 11 attacks, cost “somewhere between \$400,000 and \$500,000 to plan and conduct” (“The 9/11 Commission Report,” 2004). Moreover, Jihadis have shown an avid desire to acquire WMD like states; and within the constant metamorphosis that individuals at the micro level and the world structure at the macro level have been undergoing, Al Qaeda is likely to carry out a successful WMD attack in the foreseeable future. All things considered, it can then be concluded that Al Qaeda is by no means weak or incapable to balance against the United States. Asymmetric means give Al Qaeda an opportunity to render American material and military capabilities in the state-centric as largely symbolic; and to sustain its violence against Washington which is crucial for both its actorness and balancing potential.

#### **5.1.4. Exploiting Dark Spots of the State-Centric World**

It was argued in Chapter III that VNSAs look for particular niches in order to grow and ensure their survival. They also make every endeavor to protect and further deepen these niches. Arguably the most important of them for Al Qaeda has been

weak, failed, and rogue states; dark spots of the state-centric world where there is a considerable lack of political authority. Since its inception, but most notably after the loss of Afghanistan as a territorial base, Al Qaeda has located itself in such states which turned out to be geographical safe havens for Jihadis.

Kittner (2007) argues that a number of particular conditions make a geographic area tailor-made for Jihadi establishment and development; geographic features (e.g. difficult terrain and/or porous boundaries), weak governance, history of corruption and violence, and lastly poverty. When one looks at the countries that Jihadis choose as safe-havens, it can be observed that either one or more of these conditions are present (Kittner, 2007). Put differently, such conditions and their continuance appear to be characterizing Jihadi niches. Particular niches where Al Qaeda or Al Qaeda affiliated or inspired groups exist and sustain their activities include – *inter alia* – Mindanao (Philippines), Yemen, Afghan-Pakistan border area, West and North Africa, Bangladash-Myanmar border area, Chechnya, and evidently Iraq in recent years (see Kittner, 2007: 309-315; Spyer, 2004: 33; Riedel, 2007: 111). It is believed that, although negligible for the time being, Al Qaeda has even presence in South America and more importantly has links with other Islamist organizations there (Kittner, 2007: 320-322; see also Stern, 2003: 32-33).

These geographical safe-havens are of the utmost importance for the balancing potential of Al Qaeda. Especially after the Afghan War, the organization does not have a territorial headquarter where it can train large groups of recruits and from where it can carry out its attacks. These niches in no way serve Al Qaeda as Afghanistan did before the September 11 attacks. However, Jihadis received a



considerable degree of logistical, financial, communication and operational support in these dark spots, which at the end of the day turned out to be a breathing space for the organization (Kittner, 2007). What largely accounts for this support is the growing nexus between Al Qaeda and other NSAs such as criminal organizations, drug traffickers, and insurgence movements in failed and/or weak states. For instance, Al Qaeda has been in constant interaction with some other VNSAs which are involved in drug trafficking in Afghanistan (Oehme III, 2008: 82-84). Likewise, in taking advantage of the fragile financial sector of today's Iraq, the organization has cooperated with a number of VNSAs in money laundering and financing (Oehme III, 2008: 86).

Finally, how Al Qaeda is making use of Iraq especially after President Bush declared the end of major combat in May 2003 needs special focus in order to illustrate the importance of dark spots of the state-centric world for NSA balancing. Firstly, Bin Laden and his lieutenants portrayed the war as another wave of American aggression against Muslims; and thus as an evidence of their causes, and of the need to join Jihad immediately. The war in Iraq, in other words, was a perfect tool for propaganda and recruitment for Al Qaeda (Hoffman, 2007: 54). Several flagrant human rights abuses in post-war Iraq, like in Abu Ghraib prison, added to the potency of Bin Laden's messages (Hoffman, 2007: 54). Secondly, Iraq War helped Al Qaeda survive in the aftermath of the Afghan War since a good deal of American resources and attention were directed away from hunting down Jihadis to the battles in Iraq. Put differently, with Americans focused on Iraq, Al Qaeda bought time to recover from the Afghan War and regain its strength (Hoffman, 2004: 554-555; 2007: 54). Thirdly,

Iraq turned out to be a melting pot for Jihadis. As was the case in Jihadis' fight against the Soviet in Afghanistan, many outraged Muslims with different backgrounds converged on Iraq which was declared as "the new land of jihad" by Islamists (Gunaratna, 2004: 528). Fourthly, the ongoing instability and Washington's failure to stop insurgency and provide security in the country put the United States in a very uncomfortable position. On the one hand, Iraq turned out to be a quagmire for American forces which is draining American hard and soft power day by day. Record (2005: 41) cogently summarizes the American entanglement in this quagmire:

The unexpected and mounting Iraqi insurgency, fuelled by transnational jihadists' perceptions of growing political and military opportunities in Iraq, has entangled at least the land component of the US military in a protracted and open-ended *guerrilla* that exposes the United States to the risks of acute strategic overstretch and to the very real possibility of strategic defeat and humiliation on the model of Vietnam.

On the other hand, if the United States withdraws from Iraq soon, this is likely to play into Jihadis' hands as well since they would portray this as a victory over Americans, propagate how the United States is a "paper tiger"<sup>47</sup> and thus reinvigorate the movement with more recruits and further enthusiasm (Hoffman, 2007: 53-54). Washington's dilemma in this sense was clearly articulated by al-Zawahiri in 2003 who argued that: "If they withdraw they will lose everything and if they stay, they will continue to bleed to death" (quoted in Hoffman, 2007: 54). United States' experience in Iraq, in short, perfectly illustrates predicaments of states in the multi-centric world. Confronted with a different set of actors displaying different behavioral patterns diverging from those in the state-centric world, states – and even hegemons –

---

<sup>47</sup> Bin Laden used this term in a 1998 interview when he referred to the low morale of American soldiers serving in Somalia. He argued that Washington's decision to withdraw from this country once again exposed Americans' weakness despite they portrayed themselves as a superpower ("Interview of Usama Bin Ladin," 1998).

have difficulty in adapting to this different environment and respond properly. This in turn nibbles away the overall strength of them in time.

#### **5.1.5. Popular Support and Recruitment**

Gaining the support of a particular constituency and recruiting new members are indispensable for the continuance of Al Qaeda as a VNSA balancing against the United States. Since its inception, the organization has devised a variety of ways to justify its causes and attract new recruits to the movement. Needless to say, Al Qaeda leadership's primary target is Muslims all over the world. It was argued in Chapter III that leaders of VNSAs usually engage in what is called identity entrepreneurship. They either create identity cleavages among people or take advantage of already present ones, and galvanize them into collective violence. Al Qaeda's discourse that it uses for mustering support and sympathy in its fight is replete with attempts of identity entrepreneurship. Arguably the central part of this overall strategy is drawing largely on religious themes which appear to be the motivator of the Jihadi balancing.

Creating and digging out an "us vs. them" split is arguably the most important exemplar how Al Qaeda is exploiting religious themes to get mass support and new recruits. What lies at the core of Bin Laden's and his lieutenants' messages is that Muslims are victims of the aggression and violence of a Christian-Zionist alliance that has an inherent enmity to Islam, Islamic norms and practices, and Muslims all over the world. To strengthen the reliability of this argument, Bin Laden tries to divide the entire world into two religious camps. In a 1999 interview, he argued that:

Let us say that there are two parties to the conflict: The first party is world Christianity, which is allied with Zionist Jewry and led by the United States,

Britain, and Israel; while the second party is the Muslim world. In such a conflict, it is unacceptable to see the first party mount attacks, desecrate my lands and holy shrines, and plunder the Muslims' oil. When it is met by any resistance on the part of the Muslims, this party brands the Muslims as terrorists. This is stupidity. People's intelligence is being belittled. We believe that it is our religious duty to resist this occupation with all the power that we have and to punish it using the same means it is pursuing against us ("Transcript of "Usamah Bin-Ladin, the Destruction of the Base", 1999).

Likewise, in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Bin Laden called for Muslims to join Jihad in the struggle between "the side of believers and the side of infidels" ("In Osama Bin Laden's Own Words," 2001). In 2004, he argued that "the conflict with the West is a fateful war between unbelief and Islam, between the army of Muhammad, the army of belief, and the people of the cross" ("Osama Bin Laden to the Iraqi People," 2004).<sup>48</sup> In short, Bin Laden hopes that this fight will turn into a war of civilizations. When asked in an interview whether he supports a war of civilizations or not, his answer was:

No doubt about that: The book mentions this clearly. The Jews and the Americans made up this call for peace in the world. The peace they're calling for is a big fairy tale. They're just drugging the Muslims as they lead them to slaughter. And the slaughter is still going on. If we defend ourselves, they call us terrorists. The prophet has said, "The end won't come before the Muslims and the Jews fight each other till the Jew hides between a tree and a stone. Then the tree and stone say, "Oh, you Muslim, this is a Jew hiding behind me.

---

<sup>48</sup> It is interesting to note that during his presidency, George W. Bush appeared to be facilitating Bin Laden's identity entrepreneurship. On several occasions, Bin Laden referred to the famous "either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" and "war on terrorism-as-crusade" speeches that President Bush gave in 2001. While Bin Laden was trying to polarize and provoke Muslims against Christian and Jewish nations, President Bush gave out confrontational and polarizing speeches that appeared to be in line with Al Qaeda's discourse. Bin Laden immediately manipulated these speeches, portrayed them as a justification of the Western world's enmity towards Muslims because of their religion, and warned Muslim leaders to choose the right "camp." He argued that: "Our goal is for our nation to unite in the face of the Christian crusade. This is the fiercest battle. Muslims have never faced anything bigger than this. Bush said it in his own words: "crusade." When Bush says that, they try to cover up for him, then he said he didn't mean it. He said "crusade." Bush divided the world into two: "either with us or with terrorism." Bush is the leader; he carries the big cross and walks. I swear that every one who follows Bush in his scheme has given up Islam and the word of the prophet. This is very clear. The prophet has said, "Believers don't follow Jews or Christians." Our wise people have said that those who follow the unfaithful have become unfaithful themselves. Those who follow Bush in his crusade against Muslims have denounced God ("Transcript of Bin Laden's October Interview," 2001).

Come and kill him." He who claims there will be a lasting peace between us and the Jews is an infidel. He'll be denouncing the book and what's in it ("Transcript of Bin Laden's October Interview," 2001).

All in all, Al Qaeda involves identity entrepreneurs such as Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri who make every endeavor to manipulate religious identities. As argued several times in this study, Al Qaeda's primary objectives are political and its fight against the United States is a fight between the powerful and the powerless. This surely does not mean that Al Qaeda leaders and members are not sincere in their religious fundamentalism and fanaticism. However, religious concerns are by no means the main reason why Jihadis fight against the West today. Religious themes and concerns appear to be the motivator of the Jihadi movement; and Bin Laden, who is willing to enhance the balancing potential of this movement with more recruits, provokes religious identities of about 1.5 billion Muslims in the world.

What is the crux of the matter here is that Al Qaeda melds political frustrations with religious themes such harmoniously that the Jihadi movement becomes considerably formidable. The overall movement is complemented with a vision of struggle in the name of supernatural forces such as religion and God. In classic state balancing it may at times be difficult to persuade people for particular sacrifices. In Al Qaeda's balancing, on the other hand, harmonious combination of political and religious themes makes it easier to attract members to the organization and convince them to die when necessary because – for Jihadis – dying for Allah's cause is not something to be feared, it is something to be wished ("Transcript of Osama Bin Ladin Interview," 1997).

This discourse becomes more formidable as far as Jihadis' niches where their messages spread are concerned. While exploring how Jihadis make use of dark spots of the state-centric world, it was argued that they settle and grow in geographic areas with appropriate geographic features, weak governance, history of corruption and poverty. What this denotes in practice is that the largest audience of Al Qaeda's discourse consists of Muslims with low social and economic status and thus unpromising future prospects (see Kittner, 2007: 310-314). More clearly, Al Qaeda is able to create identity cleavages not only on religious but also economic and social grounds. That is why Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri repeatedly accuse the Western world for depleting the Muslim wealth for years and thus being responsible for the current economic misery of the Muslim world.

A particular group inclined to turn their rage into violence is the Muslim youth in Western European countries. Since most of these young Muslims are not successfully integrated into European communities in which they live, they turn to Jihadism to create a more equal and fair world (Atran, 2006: 291-292). This argument is confirmed by a few studies on the profile of Al Qaeda recruits. In the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks, it was impulsively taken for granted that madrasas mass-produced terrorists that joined the Jihadi movement. However, in time, it became clear that most violent Jihadis that carried out major attacks for the group were highly-educated, mostly having university degrees (Bergen and Pandey: 2006). An empirical research conducted by Bergen and Pandey (2006: 117-118) is informative about the recruitment issue:

Yet, careful examination of the 79 terrorists responsible for five of the worst anti-Western terrorist attacks in recent memory—the World Trade Center

bombing in 1993, the Africa embassy bombings in 1998, the September 11 attacks, the Bali nightclub bombings in 2002, and the London bombings on July 7, 2005—reveals that only in rare cases were madrassa graduates involved. All of those credited with masterminding the five terrorist attacks had university degrees, and none of them had attended a madrassa. Within our entire sample, only 11 percent of the terrorists had attended madrassas....54 percent of the terrorists were found to have had some college education or to have graduated from university...Two of our sample had doctoral degrees, and two others had begun working toward their doctorates. Significantly, we found that, of those who did attend college and/or graduate school, 48 percent attended schools in the West, and 58 percent attained scientific or technical degrees.

The authors also suggest that motivation is not the only criterion for joining the forefront of Al Qaeda, which is replete with members coupling their motivation with various technical skills. That madrassas do not provide such a sophisticated education and that 27 percent of their overall sample was Western-educated (Bergen and Pandey, 2006: 118) reveals the complexity and uniqueness of Al Qaeda as a VNSA. Al Qaeda is more than a group of outraged Muslims. It became a magnetic entity attracting skillful and highly-educated Muslims who are ready to turn their expertise into systematic violence.

Enhanced security measures of the United States in the wake of the September 11 attacks led to a concomitantly expanded list of recruitment yardsticks for Al Qaeda. In addition to rage (having religious, political, economic and socio-cultural roots), motivation, and technical skills and competence; ease of disguise turned out to be another factor to be reckoned with in recruitment. It is, for example, reported by American officials that “al Qaeda now uses chat rooms to recruit Latino Muslims with U.S. passports, in the belief that they will arouse less suspicion as operatives than would Arab-Americans” (Stern, 2003: 35). By the same token, the Muslim diaspora in Europe appears to be a perfect target for Al Qaeda’s recruitment strategy.

Since they may have passports of European countries and they may not conform to the stereotypical Arab image (Borum and Gelles, 2005: 480), Muslims in Europe have “proven more difficult for the authorities in these countries to track, predict, and anticipate” (Hoffman, 2007: 48). The evolution of the recruitment strategy further illustrates how Al Qaeda’s learning and adaptability capacity.

As a final point, it should be noted that Al Qaeda’s broad balancing discourse has the potential of widening the constituency of the organization even beyond the Muslim world. Al Qaeda’s rhetoric is not only highly anti-American but also largely shaped by the ideas of well-known Islamic intellectuals such as Sayyid Qutb, who had a particular enmity towards the Western world, Western lifestyle and the capitalist economic system (Zimmerman, 2004). Such a broad discourse has the potential of bringing anti-American and anti-capitalist movements together (Zimmerman, 2004). Although it appears inchoate and only on paper for now, there are some signs of at least a possibility of such collaboration. Perhaps the most striking example is that a few years ago leftist terrorist Carlos the Jackal called for all revolutionaries to join Al Qaeda in its fight against the United States (Zimmerman, 2004: 233-234). Similarly, leaders of some neo-Nazi and white supremacist organizations have officially declared their support for the Jihadi movement (Stern, 2003: 38). In short, Al Qaeda’s balancing has made it clear that VNSAs have the potential of triggering other NSA balancing as much as they trigger classic state balancing. They may, in other words, shape alliance patterns among different NSAs. One should not overlook the possibility that Al Qaeda may forge closer and more



tangible links with these ideologically diverse movements in the foreseeable future in order to assist its balancing objectives (Stern, 2003: 38).

## **5.2. Implications of Al Qaeda's Balancing for the United States**

### **5.2.1. Impact on the American Security Culture and Practices**

To begin with, Al Qaeda's ferocious balancing behavior shook the ground on which modern American security culture was founded. The extent of Al Qaeda's attacks especially since the early 2000s, and subsequent American response to these attacks, shattered a great deal of axioms about the American security understanding.

First of all, Al Qaeda's balancing put an end to the deep-rooted belief that the United States is invulnerable (Goh, 2003; Flynn, 2002; Nacos, 2003). On the one hand, it was long assumed that America would in no way be the target of armed attacks because of its rather isolated geographic location (Goh, 2003: 78; Flynn, 2002: 60-61). On the other hand, it was – and still is – believed by many that America's unrivaled military and strategic capabilities provided it a defensive shelter. It was very difficult for other actors, be it states or NSAs, to gather adequate capabilities to mount successful attacks on the American land. Even if they did, it was difficult, if not impossible, for them to dare such an attack because of the fear of an American retaliation. Yet, with the September 11 attacks, it became clear that even NSAs – let alone states – can launch devastating attacks on leading powers of the state-centric world (Nacos, 2003: 2). Al Qaeda's balancing, in a nutshell, accentuated the United States' security gaps in the sense that it “proved the impotence of the

mightiest military power to protect its citizens against these kinds of devastating blows” (Nacos, 2003: 2).

Second of all, especially the devastating impact of the September 11 attacks led to a drastic shift in the official security formation of the United States. Until recently, American security culture was characterized by an emphasis on traditional inter-state military relations at the expense of unconventional interactions such as asymmetric warfare (Cronin, 2002/03: 31). The asymmetric threat posed by VNSAs surely had a discursive effect in American security. Two particular examples stand out. For one thing, the American government issued a new national security strategy in 2002, which underlined the changing nature and capabilities of threats directed at both American and global security. For another thing, the United States, remaining the only superpower in the state-centric world, “declared war” on a terrorist organization. This was quite significant because such official declaration implies Al Qaeda’s actorness. Many states fight against terrorists but few of them confer legitimacy upon terrorists by declaring war on them. It can be argued that this was a declaration of war on terror, not on Al Qaeda. Yet it is Al Qaeda that was unleashing that terror on the United States. It does not seem plausible to decouple the actor from the behavioral pattern in analyzing Washington’s decision. Even if we do, Al Qaeda’s discursive impact on American security becomes clearer because declaration of war on terror means that Washington declared war on a “concept.”

Third of all, it was earlier argued in this study that a challenge coming from an NSA is likely to provoke more emotional and impulsive responses from a state than a challenge coming from rival states. The immediate assessment of terrorist attacks, for

example, can not transcend the framework of national pride. It is usually intolerable for policy makers to accept that “weak and incapable actors” with even no legal status attacked their country. Given the hegemonic status of Americans in world affairs, this very consideration held true for the United States more than any country in the world. The American response to Al Qaeda’s balancing appeared to largely rest on a willingness to “take revenge” on Jihadis for humiliating their country (Goh, 2003: 78, 89).

Fourth of all, Al Qaeda drew the United States into a war of unknown duration. In the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks, President Bush had warned that this would be “a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen” (“Address to a Joint Session,” 2001). It is now evident that he was right. The United States participated in World War I for one year and seven months; World War II for three years and eight months; Korean War for three years and one month; Vietnam War for eight years and five months; and Persian Gulf War for one and a half months (“U.S. Participation in Major Wars,” 2006). As regards the war on terror, American participation has been continuing for six years and eight months. American participation in the war on terror lasted longer than its participation in all of Washington’s major wars in its recent history except for the Vietnam War. The impact of Al Qaeda’s balancing in this respect becomes more dramatic when one considers whom the United States fought in wars such as two World Wars. A VNSA, not a major power, managed to trail the hegemon of the state-centric world into a dangerous journey; a journey with hardly known destination and duration.

Last of all, as a result of all these points discussed above, the Al Qaeda threat has preoccupied the American public, press and intelligence/security circles since the September 11 attacks. Jihadis' impact on the security of individuals, and debates on the ways of eliminating the Jihadi threat have been at the top of both societal and governmental agenda. This preoccupation led at times to a high degree of fear, doubt, and anxiety. This psychological impact was more patent in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks. These attacks created such an impact that some declared we were witnessing "World War III"; 9/11 attacks being the "Pearl Harbor of World War III" (Friedman, 2003: 33). It is easy to observe similar concerns among security circles as well, especially since it became clear that Al Qaeda' balancing capability was not restricted merely with the September 11 attacks. For instance Graham Allison (2006: 39) argues that "in the judgment of most people in the national security community...the risk of a terrorist detonating a nuclear bomb on U.S. soil is higher today than was the risk of nuclear war at the most dangerous moments in the Cold War."

All in all, although Washington is still criticized today for its inadequateness in fighting against asymmetric challenges on the field, it is indisputable that Al Qaeda's balancing led to a mental shift in the American security culture. Then one question remains to be answered by traditional balance of theorists: Is there any point in excluding NSAs from balancing dynamics if there is no difference between a major power and an influential VNSA (if not an advantage in favor of the latter) in bringing about all these ideational impacts?

### **5.2.2. Impact on American Hard Power**

Al Qaeda's balancing has inflicted considerable damage to the military and economic strength of the U.S. The aggregate costs of asymmetric attacks of Jihadis and Washington's war on terror turned out to be a huge drain on American hard power.

One indicator of this is casualties suffered by the United States. An extensive use of asymmetric violence aimed at undermining American power to the fullest extent possible is the linchpin of Al Qaeda's overall balancing strategy. More clearly, in the Jihadi outlook, there is no way of weakening the United States and thus securing themselves and their values without resort to violence. This strategic value of violence overrides any moral concern in the Jihadi view and thus largely accounts for Al Qaeda's lethality. The September 11 attacks were one of the deadliest attacks that the United States suffered in the last century, killing "more Americans than the state of Japan did in 1941" (Nye, 2003:63). In addition to civilian casualties, American military has suffered massive casualties in the global war on terror since the Afghan War. It is reported by U.S. Department of Defense that, as of June 28, 2008, American military suffered 4105 deaths in the Iraq War while 30,314 soldiers were wounded in action. In the Afghan War, it suffered 533 deaths and 2,167 soldiers were wounded in action ("Global War on Terrorism," 2008).

The economic cost of Al Qaeda's balancing is no less manifest than the human cost. Appropriations for the global war on terror by the United States Congress to date are estimated to be about \$700 billion which includes costs of Iraq and Afghanistan operations as well as spending for other enhanced security measures

(Belasco, 2008). The enormity of the economic costs of the war on terror becomes clearer with a comparative observation in the American history by Stiglitz (“War at Any Cost?,” 2008); he underlines that the Iraq War is “after the all-encompassing World War II, the second most costly, even after adjusting for inflation. In terms of costs per troop, it is by far the costliest—some eight times as expensive as World War II.”

The economic consequence of Al Qaeda’s balancing for the overall American economy is not limited to military spending. The September 11 attacks triggered a set of developments which, in combination, have chipped away the American economic power. When immediate economic costs of these attacks (e.g. costs by the destruction of the World Trade Center and partial collapse of the Pentagon, or downturn in the travel and tourism industry in 2001 and 2002) are coupled with direct and indirect expenditures in the Afghan and Iraq Wars, the economic cost of the war on terror becomes much larger (Nanto, 2004). For instance, in their recent study, Stiglitz and Bilmes (2008) argue that the true cost of only Iraq War for America totals at least 3 trillion dollars which include direct operational costs for funding the war as well as indirect macroeconomic costs (e.g. rising oil prices).

### **5.2.3. Impact on American Soft Power**

Al Qaeda’s balancing had also a notably deteriorating impact on the soft power of the United States. Nye (2004: 11-15) who first coined the term soft power contends that there are three main sources of this type of power: culture, political values and foreign policies. How others perceive these three sources largely

determines the soft power that a country possesses. It appears that, since 2001, Washington has not performed well in principally the latter two of these sources.

On the one hand, there is a rising anti-Americanism at the societal level throughout the globe. To begin with a general framework, favorability ratings of the American image has plummeted in recent years. In a 47-Nation Global Attitudes Survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2007, it was revealed that favorable views of Washington were down in 22 out of 25 countries where 1999/2000 trends were available. Likewise, in 26 out of 33 nations where 2002 trends were available, respondents expressed more unfavorable opinions of the United States in 2007 than in 2002 (“Global Unease with Major World Powers,” 2007: 3, 13). In other words, it was clearly seen that the onset of the war on terror and then later the Iraq War had both deteriorating impact on American popularity. There are surely more specific findings in the survey report. For instance, American science and technology as well as its cultural exports such as music, movies and television were favored by majorities in most of the countries surveyed (“Global Unease with Major World Powers,” 2007: 27). However, the picture seems bleaker as far as American political values and foreign policies are concerned. For example, it appears that American-style democracy has come to be lowly esteemed especially since 2002. Although no detailed findings were provided in the report, it was stated that “in nearly all countries where trends are available, people are less inclined to say they like American ideas about democracy than they were in 2002, and in many countries the declines are quite large” (“Global Unease with Major World Powers,” 2007: 25). As to examples from American foreign policy, respondents had unfavorable views on both the Iraq War

and the war on terror in general. Majorities in 31 of 47 nations (including recent victims of terrorist attacks such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, Spain, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, and Turkey) did not support American-led efforts to combat terrorism (“Global Unease with Major World Powers,” 2007: 22). What is more, in 30 of 47 nations, Washington is believed to be acting unilaterally and disregarding interests of other countries in its policy making; and this belief is overwhelmingly supported in especially Western Europe and Middle East (“Global Unease with Major World Powers,” 2007: 22). Finally, findings of a 16-Nation Survey in 2005 revealed that there is dissatisfaction at the grass roots about America’s military supremacy in world affairs. Overwhelmingly large majorities in 15 out of 16 nations surveyed favored the view that it would be better if American military power was rivaled by another state; and the only nation opposing this view was of course Americans (“U.S. Image up Slightly,” 2005: 30).

On the other hand, the legitimacy of American policies and power has been more and more questioned at the governmental level since the onset of the war on terror. Arguably the most common reason why many states consider Washington’s role in world affairs illegitimate is its perceived unilateralism. Governmental judgments go hand in hand with public opinions in this sense: America is believed to be disregarding others’ opinions and interests in its war on terror (Goh, 2003: 85). Kagan (2004) argues, for example, that why Washington parted company with European allies on the Iraq War was the latter’s concern that they simply had no role in the decision-making process of the United States. This concern did not arise simply because of the Iraq War and rather was a part of an inclusive dissatisfaction of



Europeans on their utter lack of control on Washington's policies. However, Kagan (2004: 66-67) further argues that tensions before the war deepened the transatlantic rift between European and American governments: "for the first time since World War II, a majority of Europeans has come to doubt the legitimacy of U.S. power and of U.S. global leadership." Another reason for Washington's illegitimate image at the governmental level is its perceived illegal behaviors. Avoiding to entitle captured Al Qaeda and Taliban members "prisoner of war" status and rather treating them as "unlawful combatants" (thereby circumventing Geneva Convention provisions) (Goh, 2003: 85); unlawful and inhumane treatment of prisoners at the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp (Walt, 2005: 117; Goh, 2003: 85); and reported abuses of detainees in the Abu Ghraib prison (Walt, 2005: 117) are only some of the examples that account for the plummeting American legitimacy in the world.

What is more, rivals of the United States are also making endeavors in order to deepen America's legitimacy gap (Walt, 2005; Nye, 2003; Nye, 2004). One example of this was the joint effort of Russia, China, and some European countries to disallow the American attempt to get the approval of the United Nations for the Iraqi operation (Nye, 2003: 66; Nye, 2004: 26-27). Why declining American legitimacy and soft power matters relates to their impact for the overall American supremacy in the foreseeable future. Simply put, less legitimacy of Washington strengthens both Al Qaeda and rival states in undermining American power. It strengthens Al Qaeda because "it is thorough soft power that terrorists gain general support as well as new recruits" (Nye, 2004: 25). Al Qaeda leadership propagates that American misconduct in the Afghan and Iraq Wars is indeed another wave of Muslim victimization by

abusive and unlawful aggressiveness of the United States. Declining American legitimacy also strengthens rival states of Washington by giving them an opportunity to undercut the overall supremacy of America in world affairs; and to draw attention to the need for a different balance of power.

Attacking U.S. legitimacy is also a favorite way to erode Washington's international clout. As the world's dominant power, the United States has much to gain from the perception that its power is legitimate. When people around the world believe that U.S. primacy advances global interests, Washington finds it easier to rally international support for its policies, leaving its opposition isolated and ineffective. Accordingly, the United States' opponents are currently seeking to convince others that Washington is selfish, hypocritical, immoral, and unsuited for world leadership, and that its dominance harms them. This assault on U.S. legitimacy does not directly challenge U.S. power, but it encourages other people to resent and resist U.S. supremacy (Walt, 2005: 116).

#### **5.2.4. Impact on Anti-Hegemonic Behaviors**

Al Qaeda's balancing behavior, with all its consequences on American policies and power discussed above, raised more and more questions about American hegemony. That Washington still could not capture key Al Qaeda leaders such as Bin Laden and al Zawahiri; is floundering in the quagmire of Iraq; and could not prevent the resurgence of Taliban recently largely shaped the hegemonic image of America in the eyes of its rivals.

Firstly, it triggered assertiveness of major rival states of Washington such as Russia, China and key European Union countries. In recent years, these states increasingly and explicitly expressed their concern about the "danger" of American hegemony in a unipolar world. Washington's fight with Al Qaeda provoked these concerns considerably; and at the same emboldened major states to defy the

American supremacy. On the one hand, especially the Iraq Operation of Washington largely shaped its rivals' threat perception about American power. This war was, among other things, considered as a part of larger hegemonic designs of America (see Goh, 2003: 88); "a demonstration of the dangers of unchecked U.S. power" (Walt, 2005: 117; see also Kagan, 2004). On the other hand, America's failure in especially Iraq made it clear that – despite its aggressiveness and unilateralist tendencies – Washington's military strength on the field was highly questionable. A Nine-Country Survey in 2004 – when Washington's failure was not as noticeable as it is today – revealed that American military after the Iraq War was viewed weaker than expected by Russian, French, Turkish, Pakistani, and German majorities. Only in Jordan, Morocco, and Britain – other than the United States – was it believed that the Iraq War showed the American military was stronger than expected ("Mistrust of America," 2004).

In short, major rivals are resentful about aggressive hegemonic designs of Washington; and yet they also recognize that America is in no way undeterrable because its military strength is far from perfect. More clearly, it is highly probable that these major powers view the American war on terror to have created optimum conditions for effective balancing. That these two synchronous perceptions contributed to increasing assertiveness of rivals of Washington can be observed by the great stress that these nations lay on the need for a multipolar world.<sup>49</sup> What is

---

<sup>49</sup> Official statements of major powers dating from 2001, which clearly oppose American hegemony in world politics, abound. Two among them stand out as being more revealing for the issue at hand. Former Russian President Vladimir Putin's speech at the Munich security conference in 2007 was perhaps one of the most arresting. Putin not only implicitly criticized Washington for "an almost uncontained hyper use of force – military force – in international relations" and "a greater and greater disdain for the basic principles of international law", but also maintained that unipolarity in world politics is no longer sustainable and there will be a shift towards multipolarity sooner or later ("Speech

more, these calls were put into practice by countries such as Russia, China, France and Germany, which engaged in soft balancing against Washington by depriving it of the United Nations authorization for the Iraqi operation (Walt, 2005: 113; Nye, 2004: 26-27).

Secondly, as further evidence suggesting that anti-American resentment was not limited to the discourse of other states, Al Qaeda's balancing had a practical impact on alliance patterns. Most explicitly, Washington's relations with some of its key allies were considerably strained during the war on terror. Some examples are Turkey's refusal to allow American ground forces to use its soil and Saudi Arabia's opposition to the use of its air bases by America for the Iraqi operation (Nye, 2004: 27); tensions in overall Saudi-American relations in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks (see Nacos, 2003: 9-10); and a widening gap between America and its traditional European allies such as France and Germany regarding their image of world order (Kagan, 2004). The Jihadi challenge not only deteriorated Washington's relations with its major allies but also triggered alliances among different nations that appear highly anti-American at times. Drastic improvement of bilateral relations between China and Russia in recent years is the most prominent example of this

---

and the Following Discussion," 2007). This very stance was also articulated by former French President Jacques Chirac (see "Closing Speech," 2004) and his successor Nicolas Sarkozy. In a recent speech, Sarkozy argued for instance that: "We have left behind us the simple certainties of the bipolar world, stable but unjust, that imposed its law on us between 1945 and 1990. We are no longer even in the unipolar world that began to emerge between 1991 et 2001. Words that rang true just a few years ago, such as "hyper-power", no longer apply today. For the next three of four decades, probably, we have entered an era of relative power. The economic and political emergence of China, India and Brazil, and Russia's return, are creating objective conditions for a new concert of the great powers, of a multipolar world in which the European Union could progressively come to be one of the most active poles, if it has the will to do so" ("Speech to the Diplomatic Corps," 2008).

The crux of my argument here is that consequences of Al Qaeda's balancing behavior (e.g. America's global war on terror) on the United States triggered major powers to question American hegemony more and more, with the result of an open defiance in recent years.

impact. President Dmitry Medvedev's comments during a recent visit to China is self-revealing indeed:

The strategic partnership between Russia and China has become an absolutely important, positive factor in fostering regional and global security.... And our close cooperation allows us to *strongly influence and ensure the balance of international relations*... [emphasis added]

... armed conflicts do not flare up of their own accord but are set alight by irresponsible forces seeking to change the balance of power on the planet in pursuit of the own essentially selfish interests. In this respect...cooperation between Russia and China has become a key factor in international security and an absolutely essential factor in taking key decisions within the international cooperation framework. To speak frankly, not everyone may like the kind of strategic cooperation that exists between our countries, but we realise that this cooperation is in our peoples' interests and we will make every effort to develop it further, whether others welcome this or not ("Lecture at Beijing University," 2008).

Finally, Al Qaeda's balancing indirectly contributed to the rise of revisionist aims of several countries such as Iran and North Korea. In the months leading up to the Iraq War, there was widespread opposition all over the globe which was reflected by attempts from different actors to prevent a possible American offensive. Main criticisms were that this attack would be both illegitimate and illegal and that there were still other options available to pressure Iraq before resorting to the use of force. Bush administration's determination to invade Iraq despite all opposition – and its preemption strategy in general – sent warning signals to Washington's long-standing foes. There was a perception that United States would not hesitate intervening anywhere anytime unilaterally if it viewed such intervention indispensable for its interests (Goh, 2003: 86-88). Fearing an employment of American preemptive

strategy against them, North Korea and Iran stood firm in their nuclear program in order to deter a possible military offensive from Washington (Record, 2005: 38).<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> There are arguably more central reasons why these countries seek nuclear weapons. However, deterring a possible aggressive preemptive strike from Washington appears to have played an important role in their nuclearization process. Selig Harrison argued in 2002, for instance, that North Korea was using its nuclear program as a bargaining tool against Washington and this was its response to the National Security Strategy of the United States which laid the grounds for preemptive strategy ([http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/asia/july-dec02/nuclear\\_10-17.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/asia/july-dec02/nuclear_10-17.html)).

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **CONCLUSION**

This study addressed the question of why and how non-state actor balancing should be incorporated into balance of power theory. My argument is that NSAs should be included in balance of power theory because they are becoming more and more involved in balance of power dynamics in the contemporary world. First, I suggest that exclusion of NSAs from balance of power dynamics creates a gap in balance of theory and literature. Many NSAs are no less motivated and capable than states today of engaging in balancing behavior. What is more, NSA balancing creates a systemic impact as much as state balancing does. Second, I argue that this gap in the theory mainly originates from a failure to notice drastic changes in the context and actorness of world politics. More clearly, balance of power theorists still carry out their research within the boundaries of the state-centric world, although another world exists alongside: the multi-centric world. Failure to notice this coexistence makes it impossible to understand what is taking place in the contemporary world politics. Thirdly, I examine one of the few case studies of NSA balancing today; Al Qaeda's fight against the United States. Both how and why Al Qaeda began this fight and

what it aims ultimately relate to balance of power dynamics. The organization's balancing discourse is put into practice by Jihadis with a set of unique balancing mechanisms. To date, Al Qaeda's balancing not only undermined American power but also appears to be playing a role in global power distribution dynamics in world politics.

Main findings of this research have both theoretical and policy-relevant implications. Regarding the former, this thesis makes several contributions to the IR discipline. To begin with, a detailed examination of NSA balancing made it clear that balance of power dynamics are by no means dead. Decisions to engage in balancing and concerns about resultant balances of power are still ubiquitous in world politics. Therefore, it is highly likely that the term, balance of power, will be around in political science for a long time in the future.

What is more, the entire discussion of NSA balancing revealed the urgency of revising balance of power theory. In line with the introductory remarks of the thesis, this study exposed the need of breaking conceptual jails within balance of power theory. Thus I explored why and how state-centric formulations of the theory should be complemented with transnational and multi-centric themes.

Last but not least, although the primary merit of this study stems from its role in filling the gap within the theory with an attempt to incorporate NSAs, it has also significant implications for the overall IR theory. First, this thesis addressed another apparently huge gap within the IR theory: actorness in world politics. Ever-increasing number and importance of NSAs is accompanied by a greater importance attached to these actors in the IR discipline. Yet, despite the number of scholarly work on NSAs



has increased considerably, most fail to provide an elaborate examination of the parameters of non-state actorness. In other words, NSAs are taken for granted in the discipline. A variety of aspects of a certain NSA is examined before addressing how and why that NSA acquired its actorness. This thesis provides a basic understanding of actorness in world politics, which should surely be developed further by future work. Second, examination of the dual world structure (as well as how NSA balancing contributes to its evolution), and main features of postinternational politics gave a hint as to where IR theory should be – and will be – heading for in the future. A significant conclusion to be drawn from this study is that NSAs will inevitably occupy a larger place in world politics. We have reached an individual-centric era where transnational, skillful, and influential individuals and NSAs have more and more influence in shaping the political landscape; and where the American proverb “where there is a will, there is a way” has never come this close to be realized in history. That is why IR theory should focus more on postinternationalist actors, structures, and patterns in the foreseeable future.

This study has policy-relevant implications as well. I show that Al Qaeda as a violent NSA has been balancing against the United States and has been quite successful in doing so. If NSAs, like Al Qaeda, have reached the threshold of balancing against major states; if it is highly likely that more and more actors will reach that threshold in time with further empowerment of individuals and NSAs; if VNSAs are one step ahead of non-violent NSAs to engage in balancing behavior; and if violence unleashed by these VNSAs creates catastrophic consequences, then states will have to reckon with these trends and formulate their counter-terrorism strategies

accordingly. They have to make an effort to keep up with empowered NSAs that take advantage of non-traditional balancing tools. Put differently, states have to devise more transnational and non-statist ways of countering terrorism. It appears that there is a significant security governance gap in the multi-centric world. As national security services move from the state-centric world to the multi-centric one, they encounter a number of problems that put them at a disadvantageous position *vis-à-vis* NSAs. Developing such transnational and multifaceted policies would greatly strengthen states in their efforts to counteract the complex nature of NSA balancing.

As a final point, it is worth suggesting a number of directions for future research on NSA balancing. The primary aim of this thesis was to make a conceptual and theoretical effort to revise balance of power theory. The secondary aim was to empirically test the theoretical framework of NSA balancing through the case study of Al Qaeda. Since one case study is not sufficient for theory-testing, it would be of interest to carry out other empirical studies to test the theory, building on the conceptual and theoretical suggestions presented in this thesis. For instance, a quantitative comparative analysis of major power and NSA balancing against the United States could be undertaken. Conducting a quantitative research on NSA balancing is rather difficult due to a lack of data because the phenomenon is still in metamorphosis and there are only a few cases exemplifying a full fledged NSA balancing. Still, if pitfalls can be overcome, such follow-up studies would make an invaluable contribution to the IR discipline.

Another interesting direction for further research is to revisit the alliance theory in light of the findings of this thesis. Increasing influence and balancing

potential of NSAs inclines states to forge closer links with them. These take the form of informal and/or implicit bonds as well as formal alliances. Whichever is the case, states and NSAs are increasingly coming together in order to balance against preponderant states. Theoretical research into the dynamics of such alliances would also be of interest.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### BOOKS

- Bull, Hedley. 1995. *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*. (Second Edition) London: Macmillan.
- Claude, Jr., Inis L. 1967. *Power and International Relations*. (Eighth Printing) New York: Random House.
- Friedman, Thomas. 2003. *Longitudes and Attitudes: Exploring the World after September 11*. London: Penguin Books.
- Gabriel, Jurg Martin. 1994. *Worldviews and Theories of International Relations*. London: Macmillan.
- Hartmann, Frederick H. 1978. *The Relations of Nations*. (Fifth Edition) New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.; London: Collier Macmillan Publishers.
- Hoffman, Bruce. 2006. *Inside Terrorism*. (Revised and Expanded Edition) New York: Columbia University Press.
- Jacquard, Roland. 2002. *In the Name of Osama Bin Laden: Global Terrorism & the Bin Laden Brotherhood*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Krahmann, Elke. 2005. *New Threats and New Actors in International Security*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Layne, Christopher. 2006. *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Mansfield, Edward D. and Pollins, Brian M.(eds.) 2003. *Economic Interdependence and International Conflict: New Perspectives on an Enduring Debate*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Mearsheimer, John J. 2001. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: Norton.

- Mohamedou, Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould. 2007. *Understanding Al Qaeda: The Transformation of War*. London and Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press.
- Morgenthau, Hans. 1985. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. (Sixth Edition) Revised by Kenneth W. Thompson. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- Nye, Jr., Joseph S. 1993. *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Nye, Jr., Joseph S. 2004. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Pape, Robert A. 2005. *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. New York: Random House.
- Robb, John. 2007. *Brave New War: The Next Stage of Terrorism and the End of Globalization*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons.
- Rosecrance, Richard. 1999. *The Rise of the Virtual State: Wealth and Power in the Coming Century*. New York: Basic Books.
- Rosenau, James N. 1990. *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Rosenau, James N. 1997. *Along the Domestic-Foreign Frontier: Exploring Governance in a Turbulent World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosenau, James N. 2003. *Distant Proximities: Dynamics Beyond Globalization*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Sheehan, Michael. 1996. *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*. New York: Routledge.
- Slaughter, Anne-Marie. 2005. *A New World Order*. Princeton, N.J.; Woodstock: Princeton University Press.
- Stiglitz, Joseph E., and Bilmes, Linda J. 2008. *The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company Ltd.
- Thomas, Troy S., Kiser, Stephen D., and Casebeer, William D. 2005. *Warlords Rising: Confronting Violent Non-State Actors*. Lanham, MD : Lexington Books.
- Walt, Stephen M. 1987. *The Origins of Alliances*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

- Walt, Stephen M. 2005. *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy*. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. New York: Mc-Graw Hill.
- Whelan, Richard. 2005. *Al Qaedaism: The Threat to Islam, The Threat to the World*. Dublin, Ireland: Ashfield Press.
- Wight, Gabriele and Porter, Brian (eds.) 1991. *International Theory: The Three Traditions: Martin Wight*. Leicester, London: Leicester University Press for Royal Institute of International Affairs.
- Wolfers, Arnold. 1962. *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press.
- Wright, Quincy. 1965. *A Study of War*. (Second Edition) Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

#### **CHAPTERS IN BOOKS**

- Baldwin, David A. 2002. "Power and International Relations." In Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons, eds., *Handbook of International Relations*. London: SAGE, 177-191.
- Bergen, Peter, Schuster, Henry, Nasr, Octavia, and Eedle Paul. 2005. "Al Qaeda's Media Strategy." In Karen J. Greenberg, ed., *Al Qaeda Now: Understanding Today's Terrorists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 112-134.
- Devetak, Richard. 2005. "Violence, Order, and Terror." In Alex J. Bellamy, ed., *International Society and Its Critics*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 229-246.
- Doran, Michael Scott. 2001. "Somebody Else's Civil War: Ideology, Rage, and the Assault on America." In James F. Hoge, and Gideon Rose, eds., *How Did This Happen?: Terrorism and the New War*. New York: Public Affairs, 31-52.
- Florini, Ann M. 2005. "Who Does What? Collective Action and the Changing Nature of Authority." In Richard A. Higgott, Geoffrey R. D. Underhill, and Andreas Bieler, eds., *Non-state Actors and Authority in the Global System*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Kaplan, Morton A. 1990. "Some Problems of International Systems Research." In John A. Vasquez, ed., *Classics of International Relations*. (Second Edition) Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 277-282.

- Levy, Jack S. 2004. "What Do Great Power Balance Against and When?" In T.V. Paul, James Wirtz, Michel Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 29-51.
- Mansbach, Richard W. 2000. "Changing Understandings of Global Politics: Preinternationalism, Internationalism, and Postinternationalism." In Heidi H. Hobbs, ed., *Pondering Postinternationalism: A Paradigm for the Twenty-First Century?* Albany: State University of New York Press, 7-23.
- Mansbach, Richard W. 2002. "Deterritorializing Global Politics." In Donald J. Puchala, ed., *Visions of International Relations: Assessing an Academic Field*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 101-118.
- McGrew, Anthony. 2000. "Power Shift: From National Government to Global Governance." In David Held, ed., *A Globalizing World?: Culture, Economics, Politics*. London: Routledge, 127-167.
- Noortmann, Math, Arts, Bas and Reinalda, Bob. 2001. "The Quest for Unity in Empirical and Conceptual Complexity." In Bas Arts, Math Noortmann, and Bob Reinalda, eds., *Non-State Actors in International Relations*. Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington; VT: Ashgate, 299-307.
- Organski, A.F.K. 1990. "The Power Transition." In John A. Vasquez, ed., *Classics of International Relations*. (Second Edition) Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 283-286.
- Paul, T.V. 2004. "Introduction: The Enduring Axioms of Balance of Power Theory and Their Contemporary Relevance." In T.V. Paul, James Wirtz, Michel Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1-25.
- Risse-Kappen, Thomas. 1995. "Bringing Transnational Relations Back In: Introduction." In Thomas Risse-Kappen, ed., *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In: Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures, and International Institutions*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 3-33.
- Willetts, Peter. 2005. "Transnational Actors and International Organizations in Global Politics." In John Baylis and Steve Smith, eds., *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*. (Third Edition) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 425-447.
- Williams, Phil. 2002. "Transnational Organized Crime and the State." In Rodney Bruce Hall and Thomas J. Biersteker, eds., *The Emergence of Private Authority in Global Governance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 161-182.

## ARTICLES

- Allison, Graham. 2006. "Nuclear 9/11: The Ongoing Failure of Imagination?," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 62(5): 36-41.
- Atran, Scott. 2006. "A Failure of Imagination (Intelligence, WMDs, and "Virtual Jihad")," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29(3): 285-300.
- Belasco, Amy. 2008. "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11," CRS Report for Congress: 1-57.
- Bergen, Peter. 2006. "What Were the Causes of 9/11?," *Prospect Magazine* 126.  
[http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/article\\_details.php?id=7717](http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/article_details.php?id=7717); (accessed on January 6, 2008).
- Bergen, Peter and Swati Pandey. 2006. "The Madrassa Scapegoat," *The Washington Quarterly* 29(2): 117-125.
- Biswas, Shampa. 2002. "W(h)ither the Nation-state? National and State Identity in the Face of Fragmentation and Globalisation," *Global Society* 16(2): 175-198.
- Borum, Randy and Michael Gelles. 2005. "Al Qaeda's Operational Evolution: Behavioral and Organizational Perspectives," *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 23: 467-483.
- Brooks, Stephen G. and William C. Wohlforth. 2002. "American Primacy in Perspective," *Foreign Affairs* 81(4): 20-33.
- Brooks, Stephen G. and William C. Wohlforth. 2005. "Hard Times for Soft Balancing," *International Security* 30(1): 72-108.
- Burke, Jason. 2004. "Al Qaeda," *Foreign Affairs* 142: 18-26.
- Cerny, Philip G. 2000. "Political Agency in a Globalizing World: Toward a Structural Approach," *European Journal of International Relations* 6(4): 435-463.
- Cerny, Philip G. 2005. "Terrorism and the New Security Dilemma," *Naval War College Review* 58(1): 10-33.
- Cronin, Audrey Kurth. 2002/03. "Behind the Curve: Globalization and International Terrorism," *International Security* 27(3): 30-58.
- Ferguson, Yale H. and Richard W. Mansbach. 2007. "Post-internationalism and IR Theory," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35(3): 529-549.



- Flynn, Stephen E. 2002. "America the Vulnerable," *Foreign Affairs* 81(1): 60-74.
- Freeman, Michael. 2008. "Democracy, Al Qaeda, and the Causes of Terrorism: A Strategic Analysis of U.S. Policy," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31(1): 40 - 59.
- Fritz, Paul and Kevin Sweeney. 2004. "The (De)Limitations of Balance of Power Theory," *International Interactions* 30: 285-308.
- Fukuda-Parr, Sakiko. 2003. "New Threats to Human Security in the Era of Globalization," *Journal of Human Development* 4(2): 168-179.
- Goh, Evelyn. 2003. "Hegemonic constraints: the implications of 11 September for American power," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 57(1): 77-97.
- Gunaratna, Rohan. 2004. "Post-9/11 Evolution of Al Qaeda.," *ISI* 3073: 526-530.
- Gunaratna, Rohan. 2004b. "The Post-Madrid Face of Al Qaeda," *The Washington Quarterly* 27(3): 91-100.
- Hagel, Peter, and Pauline Peretz. 2005. "States and Transnational Actors: Who's Influencing Whom? A Case Study in Jewish Diaspora Politics during the Cold War," *European Journal of International Relations* 11(4): 467-493.
- Hill, Andrew. 2006. "The Bin Laden Tapes," *Journal for Cultural Research* 10(1): 35-46.
- Hoffman, Bruce. 2004. "The Changing Face of Al Qaeda and the Global War on Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27(6): 549-560.
- Hoffman, Bruce. 2007. "The Global Terrorist Threat: Is Al Qaeda On the Run or On the March," *Middle East Policy* 14(2): 44-58.
- Jones, Calvert. 2006. "Al-Qaeda's Innovative Improvisers: Learning in a Diffuse Transnational Network," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19(4): 555-569.
- Kagan, Robert. 2004. "America's Crisis of Legitimacy," *Foreign Affairs* 83(2): 65-87.
- Kittner, Cristiana C. Brafman. 2007. "The Role of Safe Havens in Islamist Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19(3): 307-329.
- Koehn, Peter H. and James N. Rosenau. 2002. "Transnational Competence in an Emergent Epoch," *International Studies Perspectives* 3: 105-127.

- Kohlmann, Evan F. 2006. "The Real Online Terrorist Threat," *Foreign Affairs* 85(5): 115-124.
- Lieber, Keir A. and Gerard Alexander. 2005. "Waiting for Balancing: Why the World Is Not Pushing Back," *International Security* 30(1): 109-139.
- Maier, Charles S. 2007. "Dark Power: Globalization, Inequality and Conflict," *Harvard International Review* 29(1): 60-65.
- Mathews, Jessica T. 1997. "Power Shift," *Foreign Affairs* 76(1): 50-66.
- Mendelsohn, Barack. 2005. "Sovereignty under Attack: The International Society Meets the Al Qaeda Network," *Review of International Studies* 31: 45-68.
- Mishal, Shaul and Rosenthal, Maoz. 2005. "Al Qaeda as a Dune Organization: Toward a Typology of Islamic Terrorist Organizations," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28: 275-293.
- Nacos, Brigitte L. 2003. "The Terrorist Calculus behind 9-11: A Model for Future Terrorism?," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 26(1): 1-16.
- Nanto, Dick K. 2004. "9/11 Terrorism: Global Economic Costs," CRS Report for Congress: 1-6.
- Nye, Jr., Joseph S. 2003. "U.S. Power and Strategy after Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* 82(4): 60-73.
- Oehme III, Chester G. 2008. "Terrorists, Insurgents, and Criminals - Growing Nexus?," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31(1): 80-93.
- O'Neil, Andrew. 2003. "Terrorist Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction: How Serious is the Threat?," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 57(1): 99-112.
- Pape, Robert A. 2005. "Soft Balancing against the United States," *International Security* 30(1): 7-45.
- Paul, T.V. 2005. "Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy," *International Security* 30(1): 46-71.
- Record, Jeffrey. 2005. "The Limits and Temptations of America's Conventional Military Primacy," *Survival* 47(1): 33-49.
- Richardson, Louise. 2007. "Terrorist Rivals: Beyond the State-Centric Model," *Harvard International Review* 29(1): 66-69.

- Riedel, Bruce. 2007. "The Return of the Knights: al-Qaeda and the Fruits of Middle East Disorder," *Survival* 49(3): 107-120.
- Ryan, Johnny. 2007. "The Four P-Words of Militant Islamist Radicalization and Recruitment: Persecution, Precedent, Piety, and Perseverance," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30(11): 985-1011.
- Schweller, Randall L. 1994. "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19(1): 72-107.
- Spyer, Jonathan. 2004. "The Al-Qa'ida Network and Weapons of Mass Destruction," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 8(3): 29-45.
- Stern, Jessica. 2003. "The Protean Enemy," *Foreign Affairs* 82(4): 27-40.
- Takeyh, Ray and Nikolas K. Gvosdev. 2004. "Radical Islam: The Death of an Ideology?," *Middle East Policy* 11 (4): 86-95.
- Walt, Stephen M. 1985. "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* 9(4): 3-43.
- Walt, Stephen M. 2005. "Taming American Power," *Foreign Affairs* 84(5): 105-120.
- Waltz, Kenneth N. 1997. "Evaluating Theories," *The American Political Science Review* 91(4): 913-917.
- Waltz, Kenneth N. 2000. "Structural Realism after the Cold War," *International Security* 25(1): 5-41.
- Weimann, Gabriel. 2004. "www.terror.net: How Modern Terrorism Uses the Internet," *United States Institute of Peace Special Report* 116: 1-12.
- Weimann, Gabriel. 2006. "Virtual Disputes: The Use of the Internet for Terrorist Debates," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29(7): 623-639.
- Wiktorowicz, Quintan and John Kaltner. 2002. "Killing in the Name of Islam: Al Qaeda's Justification for September 11," *Middle East Policy* 10 (2): 76-92.
- Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2005. "A Genealogy of Radical Islam," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28(2): 75-97.
- Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2006. "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29(3): 207-239.
- Zimmerman, John C. 2004. "Sayyid Qutb's Influence on the 11 September 11 Attacks," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16(2): 222-252.

## **GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS**

“The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” September 2002.  
The White House, Washington.

“The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States,” July 2004.

## **ONLINE SOURCES**

“Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” September 20, 2001.  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>;  
(accessed on May 16, 2008).

“Al Qaeda’s Fatwa,” February 1998.  
[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa\\_1998.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1998.html);  
(accessed on March 3, 2008).

“A New Bin Laden Speech,” July 18, 2003.  
<http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=subjects&Area=jihad&ID=SP53903>;  
(accessed on March 20, 2008).

“‘Bin Laden’ Speech Excerpts,” September 2002.  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/middle\\_east/2248894.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/middle_east/2248894.stm); (accessed on March 20, 2008).

“Bin Laden: ‘Your Security is in Your Own Hands’,” October 29, 2004.  
<http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/10/29/bin.laden.transcript/index.html>;  
(accessed on March 21, 2008).

“Bin Laden’s Fatwa,” August 1996.  
[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa\\_1996.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1996.html);  
(accessed on March 9, 2008).

“Closing Speech by Jacques Chirac President of the French Republic to the French Ambassadors’ Conference,” August 27, 2004.  
[http://www.elysee.fr/elysee/anglais/speeches\\_and\\_documents/2004/closing\\_speech\\_by\\_jacques\\_chirac\\_president\\_of\\_the\\_french\\_republic\\_to\\_the\\_french\\_ambassador\\_s\\_conference.22085.html](http://www.elysee.fr/elysee/anglais/speeches_and_documents/2004/closing_speech_by_jacques_chirac_president_of_the_french_republic_to_the_french_ambassador_s_conference.22085.html); (accessed on July 04, 2008).

Corera, Gordon. “Analysis: Al Qaeda Three Years On,” September 10, 2004.  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3644990.stm>; (accessed on April 12, 2008).

- “Exposing the New Crusader War,” February 2003.  
<http://www.islamistwatch.org/texts/comms/newcrusaderwar.pdf>; (accessed on March 3, 2008).
- “Full text: Bin Laden's 'Letter to America',” November 2002.  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/nov/24/theobserver>; (accessed on March 3, 2008).
- “Full Text: ‘Bin Laden’s Message’,” 12 November, 2002.  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/2455845.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2455845.stm); (accessed on March 3, 2008).
- “Global War on Terrorism: Casualties by Military Service Component – Active, Guard, and Reserve,” June 28, 2008.  
[http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/gwot\\_component.pdf](http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/gwot_component.pdf); (accessed on July 4, 2008).
- “Global Unease with Major World Powers: Rising Environmental Concern in 47-Nation Survey,” June 27, 2007.  
<http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=256>; (accessed on July 04, 2008).
- “In Osama Bin Laden's Own Words,” October 7, 2001.  
<http://www.september11news.com/OsamaSpeeches.htm>; (accessed on March 20, 2008).
- “Interview of Osama Bin Ladin by John Miller,” May 1998.  
[http://www.robert-fisk.com/usama\\_interview\\_john\\_millerabc.htm](http://www.robert-fisk.com/usama_interview_john_millerabc.htm); (accessed on March 3, 2008).
- “Lecture at Beijing University and Answers to Questions of Students and Teachers,” May 24, 2008.  
[http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/05/24/2055\\_type82914type84779\\_201314.shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/05/24/2055_type82914type84779_201314.shtml); (accessed on July 05, 2008).
- “Letter from al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi,” July 2005.  
[http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/letter\\_in\\_english.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/letter_in_english.pdf); (accessed on May 13, 2008).
- “Mistrust of America in Europe Ever Higher, Muslim Anger Persists,” March 16, 2004.  
<http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=206>; (accessed on July 02, 2008).
- “Osama Bin Laden to the Iraqi People,” December 27, 2004.

<http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=subjects&Area=jihad&ID=SP83704>;  
(accessed on March 3, 2008).

“Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy,”  
February 10, 2007.

[http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/02/10/0138\\_type82912type82914type82917type84779\\_118123.shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/02/10/0138_type82912type82914type82917type84779_118123.shtml); (accessed on July 02, 2008).

“Speech to the Diplomatic Corps on the occasion of the New Year,” January 18,  
2008.

[www.elysee.fr/download/?mode=press&filename=Speech\\_to\\_the\\_Diplomatic\\_Corps\\_2\\_\\_2\\_.pdf](http://www.elysee.fr/download/?mode=press&filename=Speech_to_the_Diplomatic_Corps_2__2_.pdf); (accessed on July 02, 2008).

“Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation,” September 11, 2001.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/print/20010911-16.html>;  
(accessed on March 10, 2008).

Stiglitz, Joseph E. “War at Any Cost? The Total Economic Costs of the War Beyond  
the Federal Budget,” February 28, 2008.

[http://www2.gsb.columbia.edu/faculty/jstiglitz/download/papers/Stiglitz\\_testimony.pdf](http://www2.gsb.columbia.edu/faculty/jstiglitz/download/papers/Stiglitz_testimony.pdf); (accessed on June 25, 2008).

“Transcript: Bin Laden Video Excerpts,” December 2001.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/1729882.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1729882.stm); (accessed on March 20,  
2008).

“Transcript of Bin Laden’s October Interview,” October 2001.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/south/02/05/binladen.transcript/index.html>;  
(accessed on March 20, 2008).

“Transcript of Osama Bin Ladin Interview by Peter Arnett,” March 1997.

<http://www.anusha.com/osamaint.htm>; (accessed on March 9, 2008).

“Transcript of “Usamah Bin-Ladin, the Destruction of the Base,” June 10, 1999.

[http://www.robert-fisk.com/usama\\_interview\\_jamaal\\_ismail.htm](http://www.robert-fisk.com/usama_interview_jamaal_ismail.htm); (accessed  
on March 3, 2008).

“U.S. Image Up Slightly, But Still Negative: American Character Gets Mixed  
Reviews,” June 23, 2005.

<http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=247>; (accessed on July 04,  
2008).

“U.S. Participation in Major Wars,” November 25, 2006.

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2006/11/25/national/w092009S78.DTL>; (accessed on May 24, 2008).

<http://www.cfr.org/publication/9126/#8>

<http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/033104.pdf>